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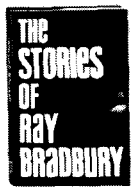

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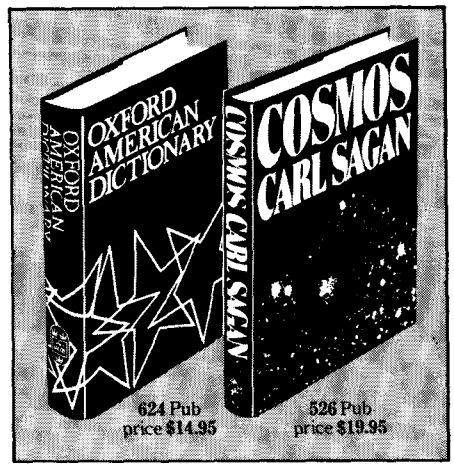

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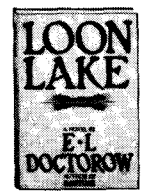

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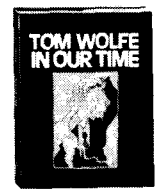

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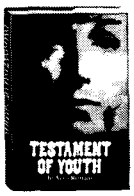

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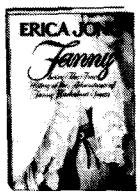

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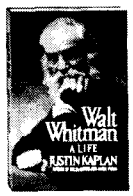

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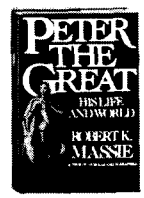

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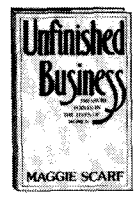

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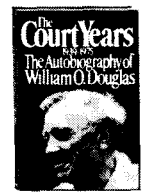

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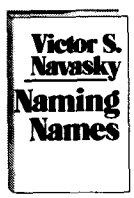

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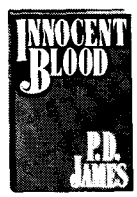

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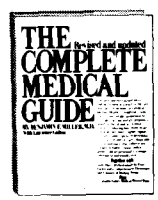

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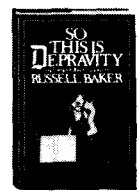

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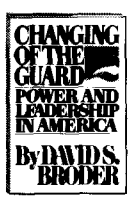

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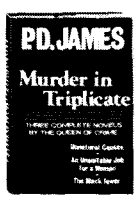

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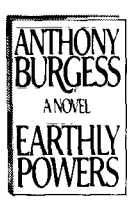

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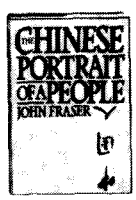

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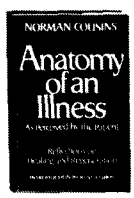

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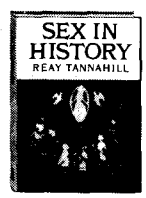

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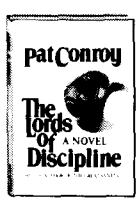

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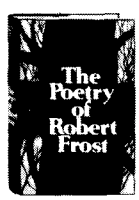

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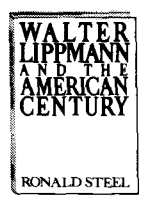

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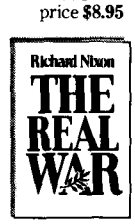

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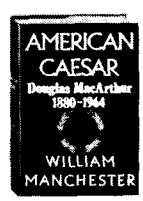

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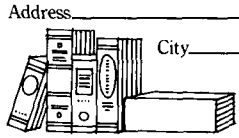

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Working Smarter

A new buzz-word is coming into vogue among people concerned about America's economic decline. The word is *reindustrialization* — as in "the reindustrialization of America." It bespeaks the need to revitalize the economy and reverse America's slide into an economic second-rater.

The marks of malaise are all around — unemployment lines, declining living standards, entire industries in trouble, whopping foreign trade deficits. Small wonder there's so much attention being focused on ways to reindustrialize America and get our economy back on a growth track. "Even the trendy set in economic policy has sensed that something is wrong in the American economy," says one economist.

One of the main things wrong is the stunting of productivity. Productivity, or output per employee, is a key measure of economic health. When productivity grows, so does the economy in real terms, raising people's living standards. When it declines, real economic growth slows and stagnates. Increased productivity also yields resources to meet public needs, such as reducing poverty and improving environmental quality.

America traditionally has led the world in overall productivity. It still does. But other countries are catching up. If current trends continue, Japan and West Germany can be expected to surpass us during this decade. Among the non-communist industrialized nations, the U.S. lags at the bottom in productivity growth. The grim results are higher prices, unemployment, lower real pay, and a blunting of U.S. competitiveness in world markets.

American productivity actually declined in 1979 for only the second time in the last three decades. It grew at about 3% a year during the 1950s and 1960s, then slumped to less than half that rate during the '70s. Had we maintained the 3% rate during the last decade, real U.S. output would now be about $400 billion higher. Personal income would be up about $4,000 per household.

Raising productivity doesn't mean working harder. It means working *smarter*. And this demands large doses of the twin I's — investment and innovation.

More money has to be channeled into capital investment for the modern plants and machines that enable people to work more efficiently and productively. Research and development must be stepped up in the quest for new technologies and innovative ways of doing things.

Whatever has happened to Yankee ingenuity, anyway? The number of U.S. patents issued to Americans has fallen 25% since 1971 while the number issued to foreigners has risen 14%. About 40% of the patents now issued by the U.S. go to people from other countries. America's most formidable foreign competitors, Japan and West Germany, outperform us both in capital investment and research and development measured as a percentage of total national output.

The reindustrialization of America must start with recognition that invigorating our productivity is a top imperative.

Policies and programs are needed to expand saving and investment, stimulate technological advances, enhance the climate for risk-taking and innovation, encourage adequate corporate profits, and ease the tax and regulatory burdens that undercut business' ability to create, compete, and produce.

Nothing less than a rebuilding of the nation's productive might is required if America is to regain its economic health.

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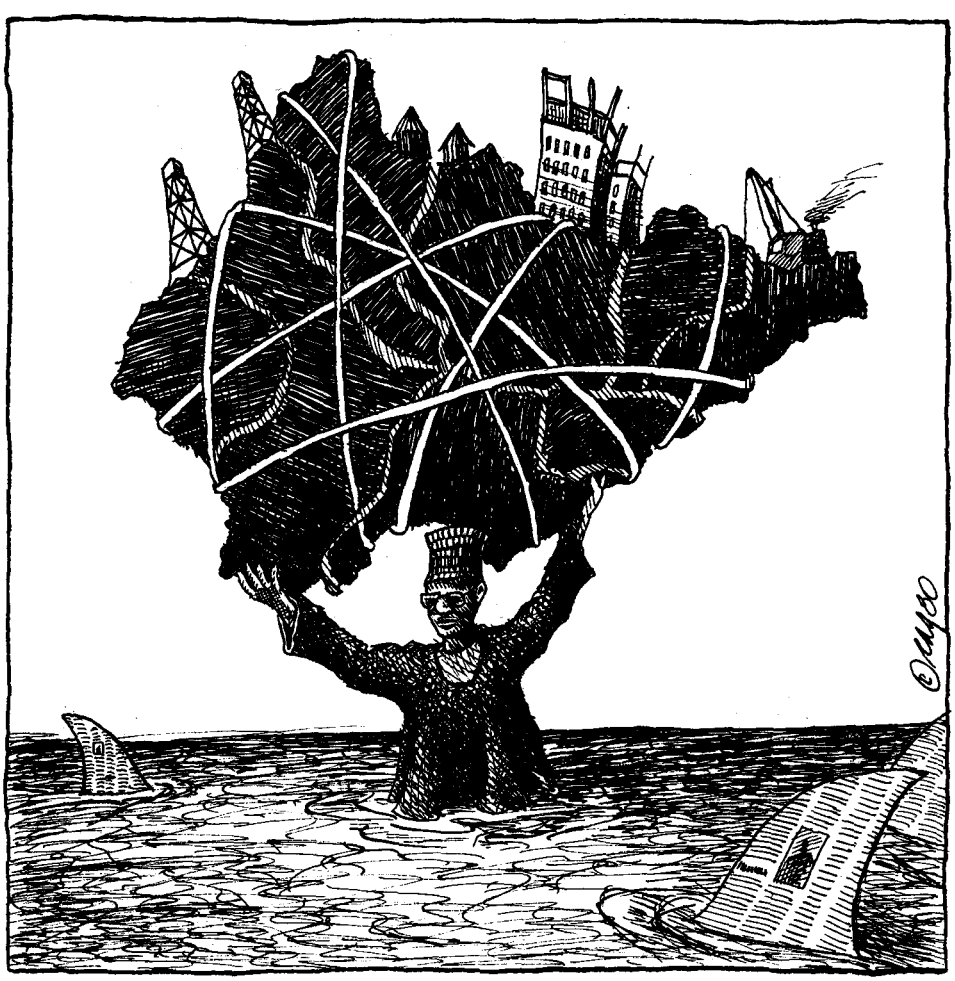
REPORTS & COMMENT

NIGERIA: Oil-Rich and Nervous



Nigerian President Shagari, presiding over a booming economy, finds his country surrounded by envious neighbors. He sees Nigeria as Africa's peacemaker—but not necessarily as its banker.

Alhaji Shehu Shagari, the first civilian president of Nigeria in thirteen years, was relaxing in the evening with a glass of orangeade and an American cigarette. Not the sort of man who puts his feet up on an ottoman when visitors are around, he instead settled deep into a sofa covered with a patterned fabric woven in a Nigerian village. At fifty-five, the slim, bespectacled Shagari looks a dozen years younger. He is of average height, has slender fingers, and his voice is so soft that his words are sometimes smothered by the rustling of the traditional robe he always wears. His seemingly constant smile is invariably called gentle by his supporters and deceptive by his critics.

On this day, the president had been besieged by scores of supplicants, bothered by aides who were completing details for his imminent tour of th

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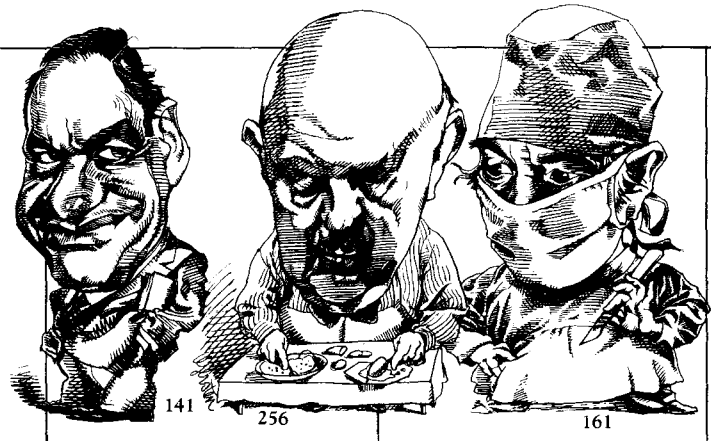

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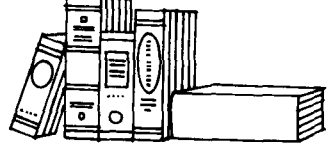

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NIGERIA

United States, and assailed publicly by critics. In addition, he had just come from an irritating meeting of the National Party of Nigeria, during which Shagari was urged to hit back harder at his political opponents, men such as Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the seventy-two-year-old head of the Unity Party of Nigeria, who was defeated by Shagari in the 1979 presidential election. So bitter is Chief Awolowo about his loss that when he refers to Shagari as "Mister President," he does so with sarcasm.

The president's aides, among whom is Michael Prest, the British-educated chief of staff, say that their man's public tranquillity is not a veneer, that he is truly unruffled by stress, a man of prayer whose devotion to Islam has helped him achieve a remarkable inner peace. Critics do not agree; they contend that Shagari is a dull, slow man, although a shrewd political operator, who has managed to survive in the rambunctious arena of Nigerian politics simply by not surfacing too often in public. On this humid, rain-soaked day, as on many others, Chief Awolowo had delivered a scathing broadside at his rival, accusing him of trying to become a father figure to this ethnically fragmented country.

Shagari does not deny that. He is only too well aware of the need for a strong, centralized government. He is also aware of the ethnically shaped forces in Nigeria that still, a decade after the calamitous Biafran civil war, threaten national unity. Shagari sees the presidency as the glue holding his country together.

"I am a strong believer in the idea of national unity and cohesion," Shagari was saying in his softly fashioned English. "We need in Nigeria to have a symbol of national unity and cohesion—and there can be no symbol for this other than the president, whom everybody looks up to as a father. Nigeria is a very difficult country, very diverse and very volatile. One has to bring together many factions. Our problem in Nigeria is nation-building. We still have to strive to inculcate in the minds of Nigerians that they were Nigerians first. Not many Nigerians think of themselves as Nigerians first; they think of themselves as belonging to one tribe or another. One has to understand the feelings of our people and try and be fair to all. One has to try and not lose one's head. One has to have a lot of patience and understanding to govern modern Nigeria effectively."

Shagari's ability to govern effectively will determine how modern Nigeria is going to be. With a population estimated by Western analysts to be some 90 million (no census has been taken for more than a decade), and with an annual income from oil of nearly $30 billion, Nigeria is the most powerful black nation in the world. One indication of its enormous clout in Africa is that not a single resolution passes in the fifty-member Organization of African Unity without the approval of Nigeria. Another is that, with an army of 130,000, Nigeria is the only black African nation with the capacity to transport large numbers of soldiers over long distances—a fact some Western analysts find ominous in the light of President Shagari's recent statement that Nigeria will actively assist "freedom fighters" in South Africa. Still another indication of this country's growing importance to the West is the $12 billion trade deficit the United States expects to have for the year 1980 with Nigeria, its largest supplier—after Saudi Arabia—of crude oil. When Vice President Mondale traveled to Nigeria last July, the subject he discussed most frequently with officials was how to reduce this deficit.

President Shagari's modest one-story Statehouse in Lagos—where, until a year ago, the country's military rulers presided for thirteen chaotic years—has become a Mecca for the leaders of the West and for business tycoons who want to seize upon the burgeoning commercial opportunities in this country. Nigeria hums with economic activity. Suburbs are becoming towns, and towns are metamorphosing into cities. Lagos and Ibadan and Kano are being transformed into megalopolises where, however, electricity is usually an on-again-off-again matter, sewers regularly overflow, and traffic on streets with huge potholes resembles a mad ballet. Tall cranes can be seen everywhere; ports are thronged with ships bringing in cement, steel, and consumer goods. Nigeria, which produced sufficient food until urbanization brought peasants to the cities in great numbers, now imports more than $1.5 billion worth of food each year.

Shehu Shagari presides over a nation made up of nineteen states, possessing a constitution deliberately modeled af-

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ter America's. It is a nation of such extraordinary complexity that its people, belonging to some 300 ethnic groups, speak several hundred mutually unintelligible languages. The three largest ethnic groups are the Hausa-Fulani of the north, to which Shagari belongs; the Yoruba of the west; and the Ibo of the east. Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, Jean Herskovits, professor of history at the State University of New York at Purchase, neatly sums up Nigeria's diversity and the impact of its history:

> This diversity has brought agonies of growth to Nigeria. After receiving its independence in 1960 [from the British], the civilian government broke down in the middle of the decade in conflicts among the three major groups over the distribution of power and resources—in which the Hausa-dominated Northern Region and Ibo-dominated Eastern Region first formed a coalition against the largely Yoruba Western Region. Two military coups, both bloody, followed in 1966 and ethnic tension escalated in the north into violence directed against easterners resident there. After the secession by the Eastern Region (self-proclaimed as Biafra) the country was plunged into civil war from 1967 to 1970. Again, the abortive coup attempt in February, 1976, in which the head of state was assassinated, had an ethnic component. In light of this history, building a genuinely united nation, with institutions which would clamp down on virulent ethnic feeling, was the priority.

The military rulers and civilians who drafted Nigeria's new constitution were agreed therefore on one critical matter: no one could become the country's head of state with only tribal support. According to the constitution, the president must receive one quarter of the votes cast in each of at least two thirds of the states in the federation.

Shehu Shagari, the "reluctant candidate" of the National party, came in first or second in each of the nineteen states. "He was Nigeria's first truly national leader," says Donald B. Easum, former U.S. ambassador to Nigeria.

When Shagari was named candidate of the National party in the 1979 presidential election, not much was known about his personal life. He was hardly a newcomer to public life,

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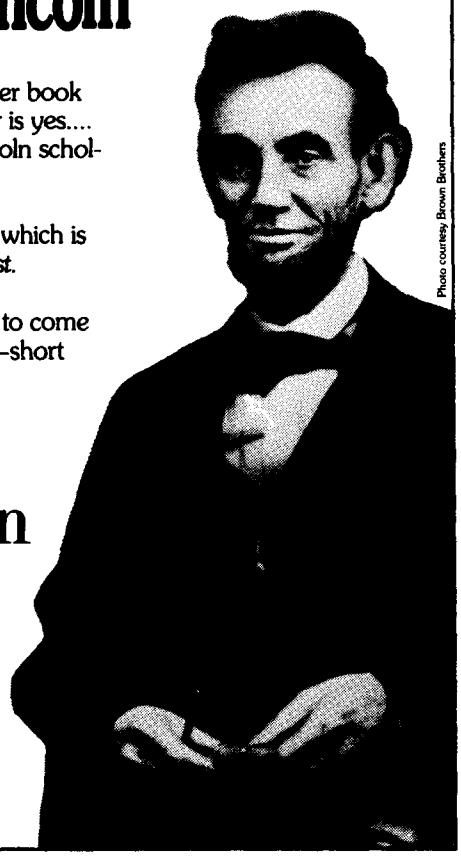

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however, having served as finance minister, as commerce minister, and as parliamentary secretary to the cabinet, beginning in 1958. He was elected to the federal House of Representatives from Sokoto in 1954. During the Biafran civil war, while serving as a special envoy to explain the Nigerian government's case to European nations, Shagari gained a reputation for forcefulness. After the war, he became federal minister of rehabilitation and reconstruction, striving for national reconciliation.

"No other person in Nigeria has had as long experience as I've had," the president said in an interview. "I knew the problems of government, I knew the problems of heads of state."

In addition to Shagari and Chief Awolowo, three other men aspired to the Nigerian presidency: Aminu Kano of the People's Redemption party, Waziri Ibrahim of the Great Nigeria People's party, and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of the Nigerian People's party. Actually, when Shagari and his associates say that he was best qualified for the presidency, they are being slightly disingenuous: Azikiwe, an American-trained historian, known popularly as "Zik," was at least as qualified. In 1944, he founded Nigeria's first nationalist political party, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons. In 1960, when Nigeria obtained independence, Azikiwe became the first Nigerian governor-general, and then its largely ceremonial president. Aminu Kano had also been actively involved in Nigerian politics for more than twenty years.

Shagari was born in Sokoto State on April 25, 1925. His father, Magaji Aliyu, died when Shagari was five years old, and the future president was reared by his older brother, Muhammadu Bello. Shagari was educated at Kaduna College, where he received a bachelor's degree in science, and he subsequently went to Mecca. A Sunni Moslem, he has made the trip several times since. After graduation from college, he taught at the Zaria Middle School and then became headmaster of a senior primary school in Argungu in 1951. At the same time, he studied education administration at Bauchi Teachers College and went to the United Kingdom on a scholarship to study teaching. During this period, Shagari became an accomplished poet in the Hausa language; his published works include *Waken Nigeria*, a book-length poem on Nigerian history, and a biography of Shehu Usmen Dan Fodio, a northern Nigerian Islamic hero.

When Shagari was elected, newspaper accounts characterized him as quiet, unassuming, and modest. But in private he displays a persuasiveness that belies his reputation for oratorical tepidity. One day recently, for example, Azikiwe and some volatile opposition legislators came to the Statehouse in Lagos and harangued Shagari on a number of political matters. Shagari met with them, listened quietly, and finally spoke with such conviction that Azikiwe berated his colleagues for showing disrespect to the president.

From the very beginning, Shagari was convinced that as president he would need to focus on the twin problems of national unity and economic development. "I have always felt that the allegiance of Nigerians ought to be to Nigeria first," he says. "The problem is to embrace everybody, irrespective of their leaning, political or social. You can't afford to have your own prejudices in modern Nigeria."

Shagari's way of curbing ethnicity is to stress constantly the "federal character" of Nigeria's new constitution and government. He recognizes, however, that tribalism is fundamental to Africa. "You can never underestimate tribalism in Nigeria," said a Western diplomat who has been in Lagos frequently. "There are both tribal loyalties and national loyalties in Nigeria, as there are in other parts of Africa. Shagari is focusing on national loyalties. So far, he appears to be gaining. Shagari has a finely tuned sense of how you give everybody a stake. He keeps everybody involved in the business of national unity and development. He is, most of all, very firm in not allowing tribal pressures to build up."

In his first twelve months in office, the president resisted pressures from northern Hausa-Fulanis who feel that Yorubas have dominated the upper echelons of government and the diplomatic corps for too long. He chose as his running mate an Ibo, Dr. Alex Ekwueme. His cabinet is culled from all nineteen states, as the Nigerian constitution specifies. His personal aides are not only trusted associates from the National party and from his campaign but people who, like Michael Prest, have spent much of their professional life abroad.

One of the criticisms that Shagari smarts at concerns the so-called "Moslem nature" of Nigeria. The country's constitution and government policies are specifically secular. Nigeria regularly sends envoys to Islamic conferences, but only as observers. Significant numbers of Christians and Animists live in Nigeria. When the National party entered into a working coalition with the National People's party in the 449-member House of Representatives and the 95-member Senate, the alliance extracted promises from the Moslem-dominated National party that Nigeria would continue to be a secular state, as spelled out in the constitution. Some members of the People's party were concerned about the possible rise of an Islamic republic, especially since the president himself comes from northwestern Sokoto, the home of a nineteenth-century jihad, or holy war.

Along with these concerns about ethnicity, Shagari has successfully assuaged fears that Nigeria's new American-style political system would not work. Some legislators in the National Assembly were convinced that executive cabinet officials were accountable to them. Shagari tactfully informed Nigerians, during his travels around the country, in many speeches, and in private sessions with legislators, that Nigeria had embarked on a wholly different endeavor—that he was an executive rather than a ceremonial president. He dispensed patronage judiciously and reduced complaints from the states and from other political parties that only the National party obtained the largesse. The thorny question of revenue-sharing with states has still to be effectively resolved, but that is a long-standing problem, not one created by Shagari.

Politics in Nigeria is alive and kicking—and frequently kicking at Shagari. There are thirteen national newspapers, most of which criticize him, less for his politics than for his style. To be sure, the political parties own or support the papers.

Shagari's tactic is simply to ignore all personal criticism. He has therefore been called, sarcastically, "a saint with many cheeks to turn." But Shagari says it is beneath the dignity of a president to respond in kind.

Some analysts contend that Shagari's biggest problem in the years ahead (the Nigerian presidency runs a course of four years, like its American counterpart) will be not ethnicity nor

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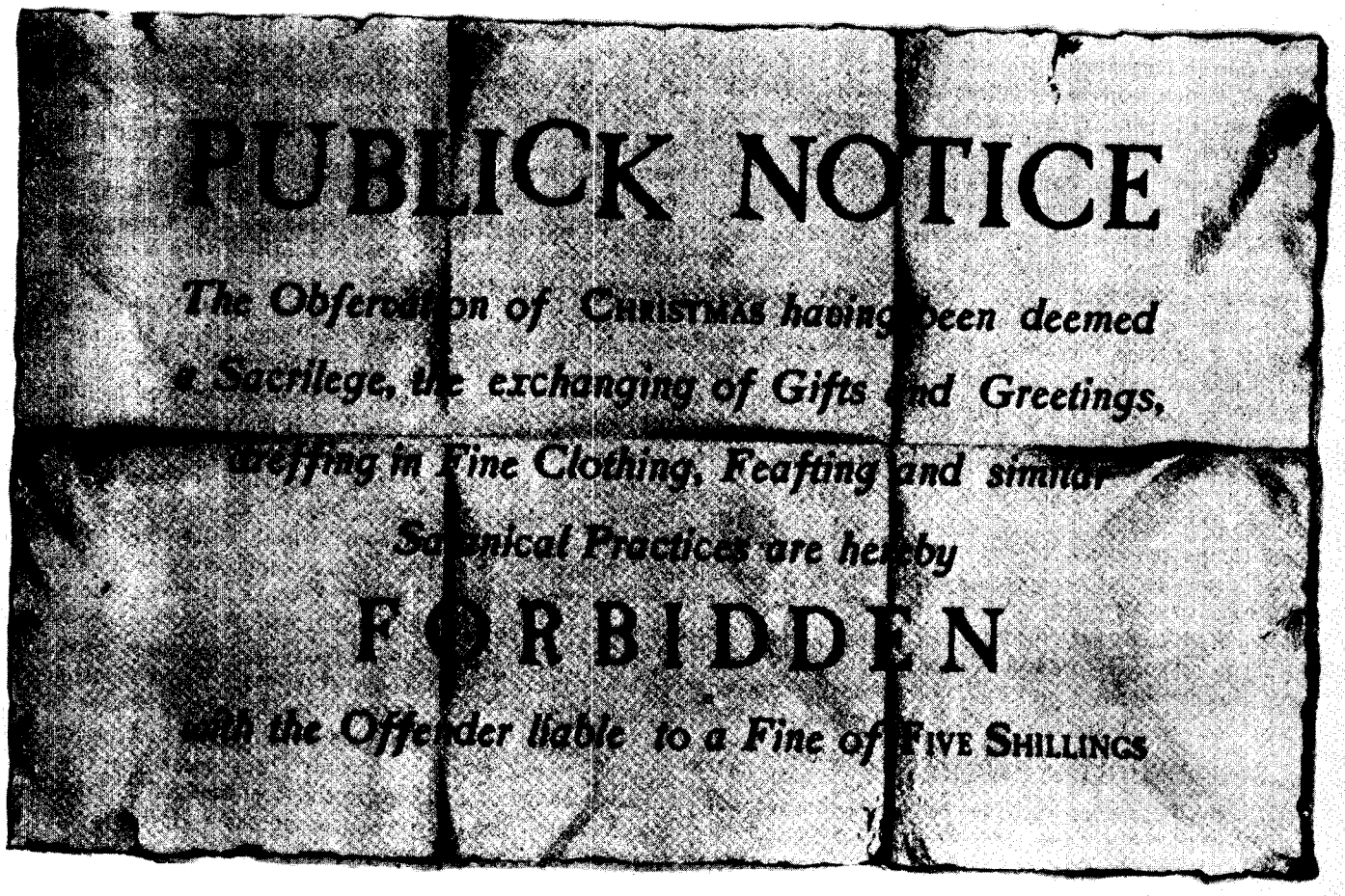

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religion nor domestic politics but whether he can effectively translate Nigeria's oil wealth, which is temporary, into the economic development that the country needs so desperately. For Nigeria, though portrayed in the foreign press as oil-rich, is in reality quite poor; its per capita income is barely $600. Far more hovels than decent houses are seen in Lagos, Kano, Ibadan, Kaduna, Enugu, and Jos. Only one fifth of the country's 25 million school-age children can go to school, because too few schools have been built and staffed. People may not starve, as they do in Uganda, but their diet is extremely poor, based as it is on maize, bananas, and inferior-quality meat.

Population is increasing at the rate of more than 2.6 percent annually, while the rate of economic growth is not much higher. The military government committed itself to vast public projects such as highway networks and tall buildings, but these projects entailed a great deal of waste and corruption. The economic problems Shagari faces are enormous.

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What is buying time for Nigeria is oil (crude oil reserves amounted to 17.4 billion barrels at the beginning of 1980). But Nigeria's oil "wealth" has, in its own peculiar way, put additional pressures on the country. During an interview with the New York *Times*, President Shagari spoke about this.

"Our development is still at a very early stage," he said. "We have a lot of problems although we are large, and have potential problems that are not so different from those of smaller countries. Some of the smaller countries in Africa don't see it that way. Much as we would like to help others who are less fortunate, we have to keep in mind our own problems."

Some poorer African countries, such as bankrupt Tanzania, feel that Nigeria's economic assistance to its sister nations has not measured up to its rhetoric about African cooperation and unity. Nigeria is undoubtedly the giant of this huge continent. The mere suggestion by Shagari, for example, that a referendum be held in the disputed Western Sahara (which is controlled by Morocco but claimed by a Marxist guerrilla group calling itself the Polisario) immediately drew endorsement at a meeting of the Organization of African Unity in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Nigeria sees itself as the peacemaker of this continent, but not necessarily as the banker. The Shagari government will not easily convince other Africans that after money is subtracted for its own large-scale development needs, little will be left over for what Shagari calls the Economic Emancipation of Africa.

Precisely because Nigeria is perceived by other African nations as a giant, it has become the undisputed political leader of the continent. Nigeria contributes an unspecified sum to the liberation fund of the Organization of African Unity and has supported guerrillas fighting for the independence of Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The loathing of South Africa is an article of faith in Nigeria, but no one yet knows how far Nigeria will go in its support of guerrillas within Namibia and South Africa.

When he discusses South Africa, Shagari's choler rises, especially on the role of the United States and the West in general. The president is deeply disappointed that the West is not "more forthright" in its opposition to apartheid. "I do believe if the Western powers genuinely felt as we feel about apartheid it would have ended by now," the president says. "They express some sympathy, but sometimes their own self-interest overrides the sympathy. I think the West needs to do some rethinking about the situation." What Nigeria clearly wants from the United States is a total economic boycott of South Africa and complete disinvestment, measures the United States has rejected on the grounds that they wouldn't really work and that sanctions would hurt such black states as Zambia, Mozambique, and Botswana, which must depend on the white minority regime in South Africa for imports and trade.

Shagari warns that Nigeria may decide to use "all methods at our disposal" in the fight against South Africa and in persuading the West to join this fight. What this means is that Nigeria may employ the oil weapon, something it didn't do when other members of OPEC imposed an oil embargo on the United States following the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. But now Nigeria has foreign exchange reserves of more than $6 billion, and Western analysts say that the country can afford to impose an embargo on its Western customers, particularly the United States. Some analysts also suggest that because of the current glut in oil supply, this may even be the right time for the Nigerians to engage in some sort of punitive action.

Relations between Nigeria and the United States have never been the best. The nadir was reached in 1975 and 1976, when President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger attempted to get Nigeria to back Unita, the pro-Western guerrilla group in Angola. General Obasanjo, who was then military head of state in Nigeria, reacted adversely and even asked that Mr. Kissinger not visit. Early last fall, when Vice President Mondale traveled to Nigeria with a trade-and-technical delegation, the Nigerians again expressed concern over possible renewal of American aid to Unita, which has once more appealed to the West for money and arms. The United States assured the Nigerians that it had no intention of becoming involved with Unita.

Relations with the United States are likely to turn primarily on economic issues, however. Nigeria is hoping that American businesses, in addition to purchasing crude oil, will help in the development and marketing of natural gas. Such economic cooperation may

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become the basis for improved relations between the two countries.

But other signs of rapprochement are visible. For instance, Nigerian students are coming to the United States for education in greater numbers. More than 20,000 Nigerian students are now in the United States, a number second only to that of Iranian students (an estimated 40,000). Nigerian military officials are increasingly traveling to the United States (Nigeria spent more than $10 million in 1979 to educate some of these military personnel in the United States), and so are immigration officials. And more American businessmen are going to Nigeria, lured by commercial opportunities. Shagari is seeking greater American investment in agrobusiness and has promised an end to red tape and corruption, which have long hampered foreign investment in this country, potentially black Africa's largest consumer market.

On this lambent Lagos evening, Alhaji Shehu Shagari ("Alhaji" is an honorific, denoting that a man has made the pilgrimage to Mecca) is reflecting on all these matters. His youthful visage conceals fatigue. Suddenly he starts talking about the effect that public life has had on his private life. He says he has been unable to read anything except government reports and files, to compose a single verse of poetry in the past year, to spend much time with his seven children, ranging in age from twenty-eight to two, and that he has little opportunity even to relax.

"But there was so much to be done in our first year," Shagari says, "it has been such a great challenge, that one doesn't mind working all this much. But I know I can't go on like this. I'm going to have to rearrange my schedule and my time; I'm only human."

—PRANAY GUPTE

ENERGY: The Myth of Independence

Energy independence is a fine idea, except that it would raise taxes, increase inflation, weaken the economy, and endanger public health and the environment.

Last July 4 was to be celebrated, by President Carter's decree, as "Energy Independence Day." The idea was part substance and part gimmick: two Carter energy bills were on their way to final congressional approval, and the President decided to sign them both on the nation's birthday as a way of demonstrating America's determination to deliver itself from the bondage of imported oil. To his surprise, the House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly to kill his proposal for the creation of an Energy Mobilization Board, leaving him with only a synthetic fuels subsidy bill to sign. So the White House decided not to declare energy independence. However, many people cling to the idea that energy independence is both possible and desirable.

The phrase was first used by President Nixon to summarize his grand Project Independence, whose goal was to make the United States entirely self-sufficient in energy supplies. By now many others have borrowed the idea. In his acceptance speech at the Republican convention last summer, Ronald Reagan vowed that in his administration, we Americans would "free ourselves from imported oil." Amoco Chemicals Corporation, a division of Standard Oil of Indiana, has advertised, "We have the stuff to be energy self-sufficient." John Sawhill, chairman of the new federal Synthetic Fuels Corporation, has christened coal "the dynamo of energy independence." In its advertisements, the Edison Electric Institute warns, "Our national economic security is at stake as long as we continue to be held hostage by foreign oil," and suggests that we can wean ourselves from oil imports only by using more coal and nuclear power. Environmentalists have proposed that a nationwide shift to solar power, combined with greater conservation, could achieve the same thing.

Is it any wonder that Americans yearn for energy independence? Since the Arab oil embargo of 1973–1974, which set off a fourfold increase in the world price of oil, we have grown increasingly conscious and resentful of our need for imported oil. The 1979 gasoline lines, precipitated by the overthrow of the shah of Iran, made the dangers of dependence on foreign oil even plainer, and our unhappy relations with his successor underscore the point. Today we import more than a third of the oil we consume, but many Americans can remember a time when we had oil reserves so vast that we could do without imports. The United States was a net exporter of oil as recently as 1947, and ten years later it imported only a tenth of its supplies.

In spite of its surface allure, however, energy independence is a pernicious notion that is likely to gain us little and cost us much. The idea seems new, but on examination it turns out to be the old and discredited doctrine of mercantilism resurrected once again. The mercantilists reached the peak of their influence in eighteenth-century England before being routed in 1776 by a Scottish professor named Adam Smith in his book *The Wealth of Nations.* Believing wealth to be a fixed quantity, they felt that no nation could prosper other than at the expense of its neighbors. Their main prescription was the erection of barriers to imports, which would prevent the loss of gold and silver to other nations.

Adam Smith showed that this doctrine actually reduced the prosperity of all nations, particularly the ones who followed it most rigorously. "It is the maxim of every prudent master of a family," wrote Smith, "never to attempt to make at home what it will cost him more to make than to buy. . . . What is prudence in the conduct of every private family, can scarce be folly in that of a great kingdom. If a foreign country can supply us with a commodity cheaper than we ourselves can make it, better buy it of them with some part of the produce of our own industry, employed in a way in which we have some advantage." Just as any man who insisted on growing his own food, making his own clothes, shoeing his own horse, and building his own home would be very poor indeed, any nation that insisted on producing everything it needed would condemn itself to poverty. Prosperity is possible only when each country produces chiefly what it can grow or manufacture cheaply and expertly. Obviously, the U.S. would be foolish to attempt to produce all its own coffee or bananas, though we consume vast quantities of both. Other countries, thanks to climate and geography, can produce them more cheaply than

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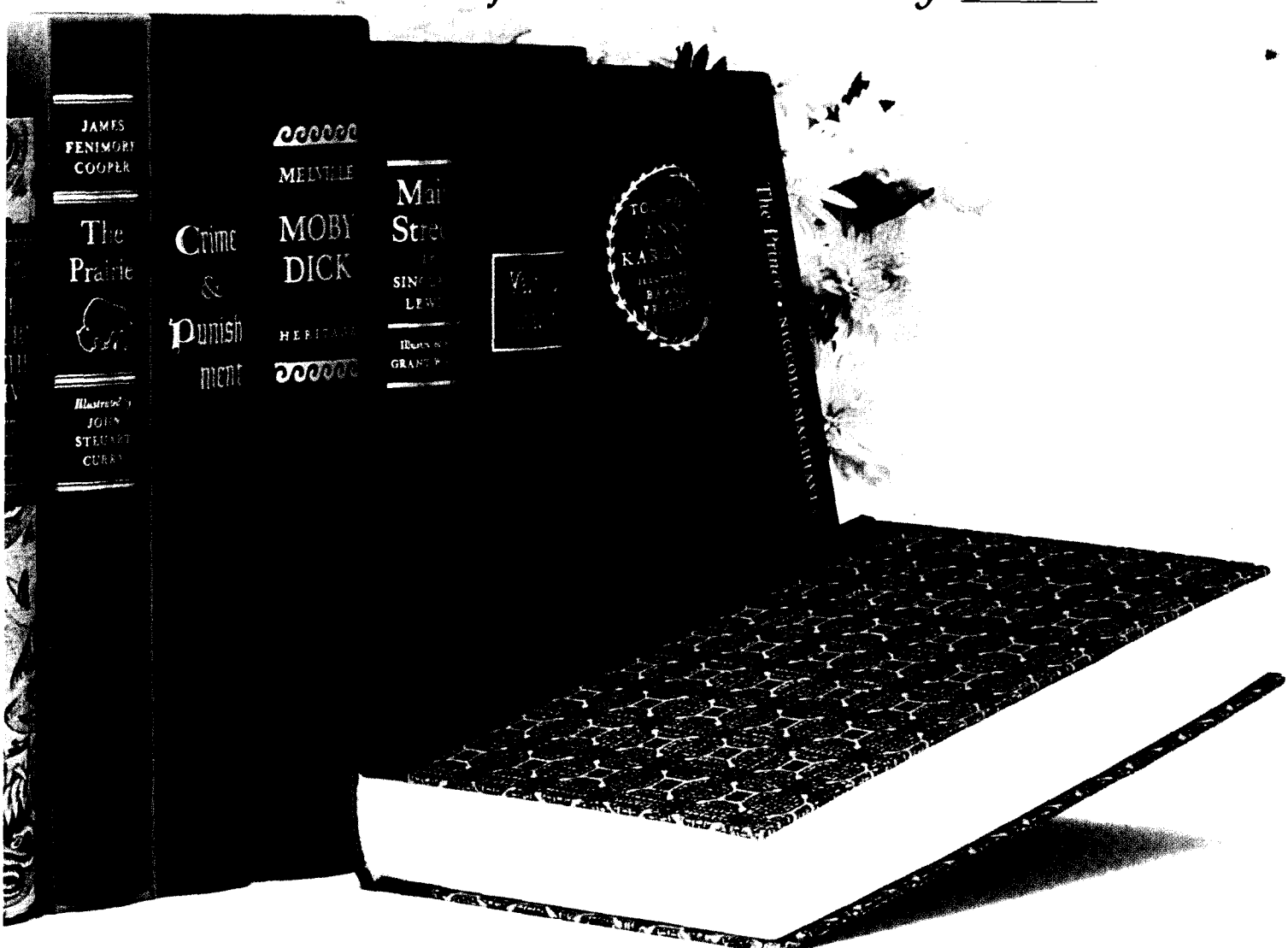

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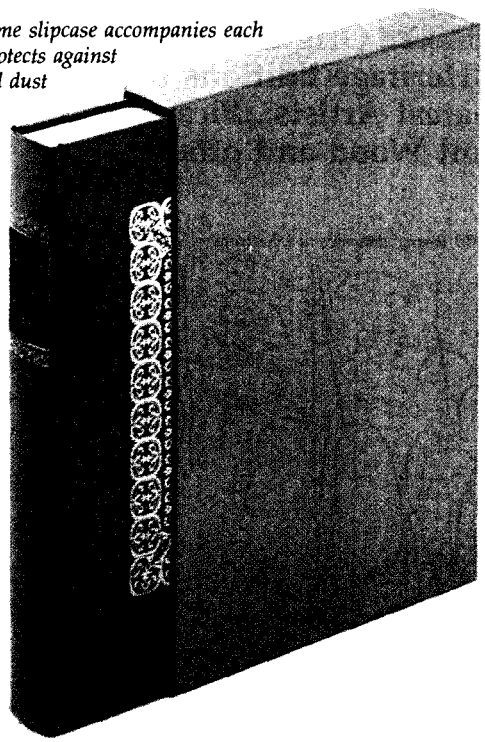

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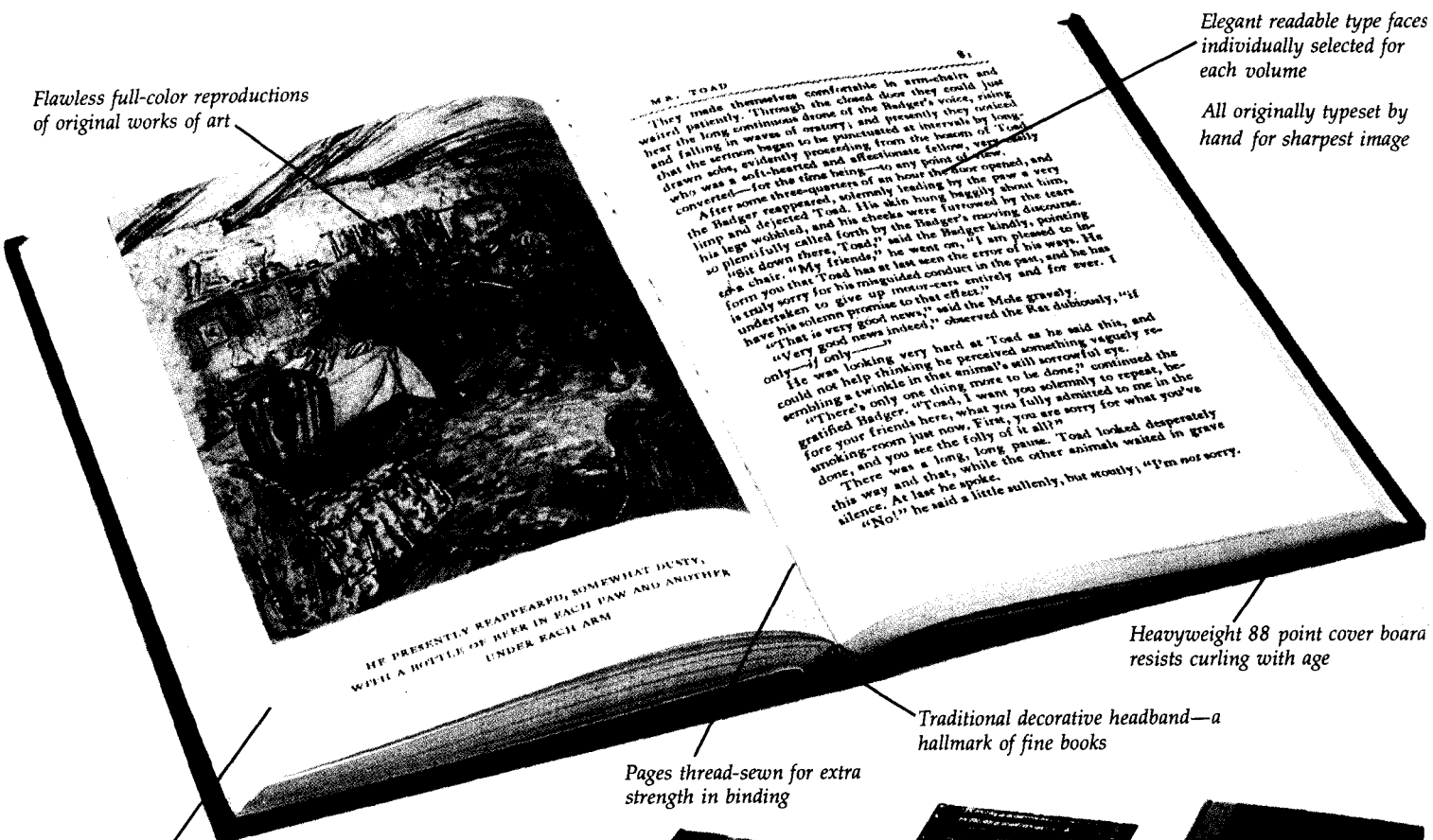

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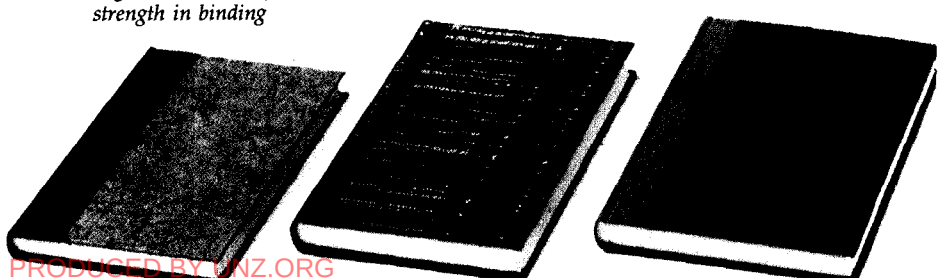

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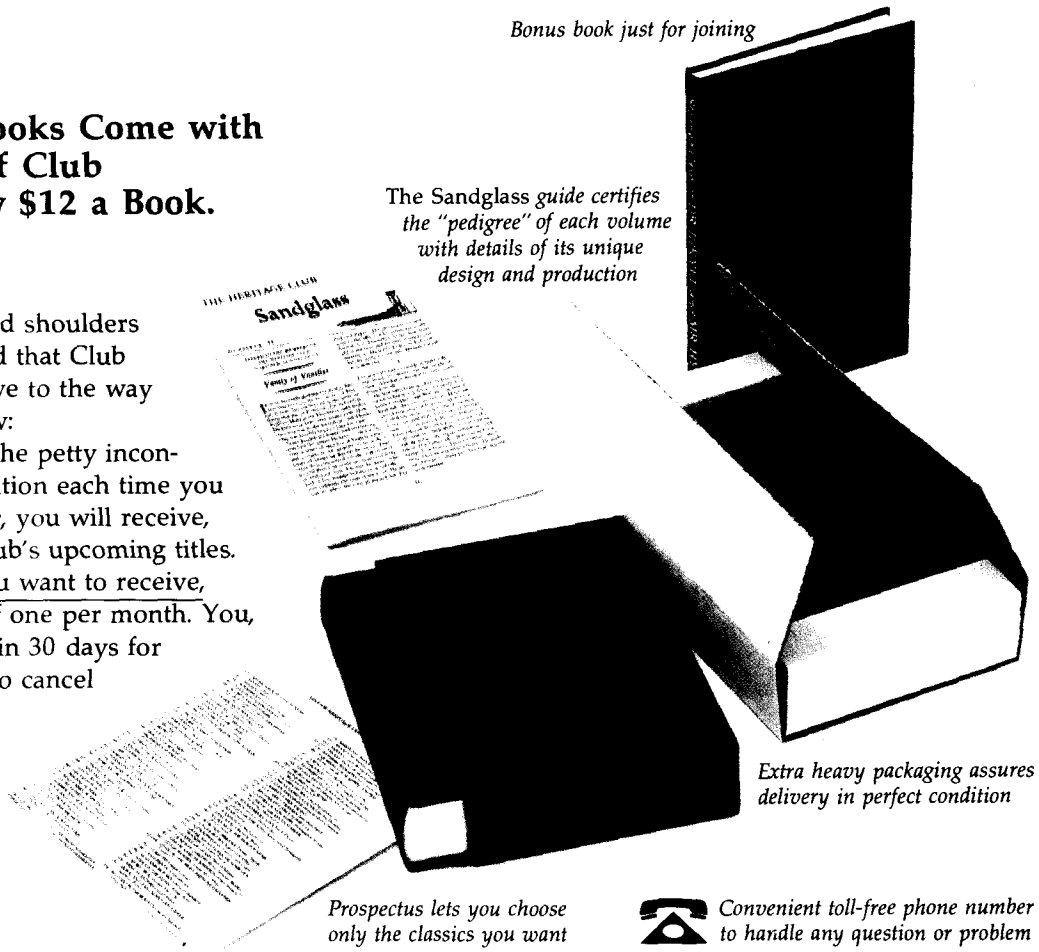

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we can. But the U.S. can manufacture computers and airplanes more cheaply than can most other nations. Trade enables all nations to get more of what they want for less.

What is true of coffee and airplanes is also true of oil. We can buy oil from the OPEC nations more cheaply than we can produce it at home; if we couldn't, economic incentives would already have made us self-sufficient in oil. Though high OPEC prices are unpleasant to pay, the cost of producing all our own oil would be even more painful. Despite the astronomical price increases of the past decade, which have brought the cost per barrel from less than $2 to more than $33, imported oil is still cheaper than the alternatives.

The various schemes for energy independence are alike in their high cost. The energy program Carter unveiled in July 1979 would have cost $142 billion in the next ten years. And, at the end of that time, if everything went as planned, the U.S. would still be importing 4.5 million barrels of oil per day. Carter's synthetic fuels program alone originally carried an $88 billion price tag, and by optimistic estimates it would have produced no more than 2.5 million barrels of oil per day by 1990.

The 1979 report by Harvard Business School's Energy Project urged a transition to conservation and solar energy, to be financed by tax credits of 50 to 60 percent—in effect committing the government to pay half or more of the cost of all investments in conservation measures and solar equipment. Expensive as it would be (the authors discreetly avoided any estimates of how much revenue the Treasury would lose, but the amount would surely be in the tens of billions), this program would merely hold our oil imports at the 1977 level. The American Petroleum Institute likewise shies away from guessing the cost of its proposal to double coal consumption and triple the amount of energy provided by nuclear power, which, it says, would provide "a high degree of energy self-sufficiency." But the Carter Administration's coal conversion program, which supposedly would reduce the nation's total oil consumption by only 6 percent, would cost $10 billion. A nuclear power plant nowadays costs more than $1 billion, and nearly one hundred plants would be needed to meet the API's goal.

The point is that the expensive oil we now import is still cheaper than almost anything that might replace it. Hence any serious effort to achieve energy independence would make us all poorer. In order to reduce imports dramatically, gasoline would have to be made much more expensive by a heavy tax—say, a dollar or so. Other energy alternatives, such as electricity, would also have to be more expensive, both to reduce consumption and to help utilities pay the cost of new coal-fired equipment and nuclear power plants. Taxes would have to be raised to finance all those conservation and solar-energy investments. Industry would have to incur higher energy costs, meaning that productivity would be lower and prices higher. This would hurt the international competitiveness of American goods, which in turn would stimulate a rise in imports of all kinds. Instead of importing comparatively cheap foreign oil, we would end up importing goods made with that oil—leaving us no better off than before, and the oil-producing nations no worse off.

But the costs of importing oil are not, some argue, all financial. Our dependence on foreign oil exposes us to the constant threat that we will be deprived of it for political reasons. According to this line of thought, our oil imports force us to indulge the political demands of the producing nations, thus compromising our independence. But the threat of another oil embargo is greatly exaggerated. The U.S. is currently under an embargo by Iran, with no noticeable ill effects. Even the 1979 halt in Iran's oil exports would have caused no great suffering had it not been for the federal government's clumsy allocation system and price controls. The original Arab oil embargo was in fact a failure: inventories in the U.S. were higher at the end of it than they had been at the beginning, because the Arab countries didn't cut production enough to really hurt. As a result, the U.S. was able to buy adequate supplies from countries that were still able to buy from the Arab producers.

In any event, cutting off the flow of oil would require the Arab oil-producing nations (which are regarded as the primary threat in this scenario) to forgo a lot of revenue. That is why none of them have tried it. Most of them, in fact, have been producing at or close

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to capacity. But even assuming that the threat is real, insurance can be bought in the form of a strategic petroleum reserve—which Carter promised would reach one billion barrels, but which has remained at less than 100 million barrels.

If oil imports involve nonfinancial costs, they also produce nonfinancial benefits. The most important of these is that they allow us to postpone a transition to other forms of energy that are either more expensive or more dangerous than oil. If we insist on complete self-reliance, we have to rely less on oil and more on nuclear power, coal, and solar energy.

Shifting to any of these will most likely have unattractive consequences. The near-disaster at Three Mile Island did not prove conclusively that nuclear power is unacceptably dangerous to public health, but it did raise the prospect that making nuclear power safe will price it out of the market—at least in the absence of large new subsidies to the industry. Most likely we cannot rapidly expand our use of nuclear energy *and* guarantee its safety. If we want the energy, we'll have to take the risk; if we want safety, we'll have to wait for the energy.

The dangers in increasing the use of coal are even more uncertain, and possibly more grave. Aside from the air pollution and the strip-mining that coal historically has entailed (which environmentalists say can be cleaned up at no great cost), new problems arise that could be a much greater obstacle to coal use. One is "acid rain," which is blamed for destroying almost all fish life in New York's Adirondack Mountains and for damaging soil and plant life in other places. Some scientists think acid rain is caused by emissions from coal-burning plants. On this issue the jury is still out. Nor has it reached a verdict on the "greenhouse effect." Some experts think the combustion of fossil fuels, especially coal, will eventually cause a huge accumulation of carbon dioxide and, in turn, a worldwide warming trend that will melt the polar icecaps, flood coastal lands, and render vast regions into deserts. If this prediction is accurate, every country will have to reduce its use of coal sharply. Right now experts don't agree that burning coal contributes much to the carbon dioxide buildup, or that the accumulation of CO_2 will have these unpleasant consequences. Hence we have as yet no reason to forbid utilities to substitute coal for oil when it is economical. But we ought to hesitate before forcing an immediate and full-scale shift to coal.

Until recently, the problem with producing synthetic fuels from coal and oil from shale was that it cost more than producing conventional oil. Thanks to the oil price increases of the past two years, however, synthetic fuels are now roughly competitive with oil. But the development of a full-scale industry will still take years—assuming, of course, that the cost estimates are not too low, which they may well be. Even with the enormous subsidies proposed by Carter in 1979, synthetic fuels and shale oil would have met only about one sixth of current demand, and not until 1990. These fuels must also surmount some formidable environmental hurdles. Making synthetic fuels from coal requires large amounts of water, a commodity somewhat scarce in the West, where most synfuel plants would be located. A large synfuels industry would also require a rapid expansion in coal production, which would in turn create possibly overwhelming pressures to gut existing strip-mining rules. Shale oil presents other problems, the biggest being disposal of the roughly two tons of shale required to extract a single barrel of oil and the water pollution it might cause.

Gasohol, everybody's favorite fuel, is considerably more costly than the gasoline made from supposedly expensive imported oil. Right now ethyl alcohol costs about $1.80 a gallon, compared to the retail price of $1.31 for premium unleaded gasoline. To make gasohol competitive, oil would have to cost more than $50 a barrel. Gasohol can compete with gasoline at the retail level (as it does in some areas) only because it is exempt from federal gasoline taxes and from some state taxes. In Iowa, for example, the total subsidy amounts to about $59 per barrel of alcohol—considerably more than the cost of OPEC oil. This subsidy probably does nothing to reduce oil imports, since producing ethanol from corn, the usual method, actually requires more energy than the ethanol provides.

Solar energy, which is safe, renewable, and environmentally benign, has serious disadvantages, too. The first is that the most useful solar energy source, the photovoltaic cell (which converts sunlight directly into electricity), is by far the most expensive—more expensive than any of its existing or potential competitors. One oil company study estimated that photovoltaic cells will not be competitive with oil until the latter reaches a price of about $100 per barrel. Other energy sources, such as oil from shale or tar sands and gas from coal, are estimated to cost from half to two thirds less. This estimate is consistent with independent scholarly studies.

The second problem is that comparatively cheap forms of solar energy have only limited uses. Solar rooftop collectors for space and water heating are already economical in some parts of the country, depending on the prices of such competing fuels as electricity and natural gas. But until scientists achieve a breakthrough to lower dramatically the cost of energy from photovoltaic cells, solar energy won't be sufficient to reduce our dependence on imported oil. Even the aggressively optimistic Harvard study calculated that solar power could provide no more than 20 to 25 percent of the nation's energy by the turn of the century—and that only with the federal government paying fully half of the cost.

The idea that the United States can seal itself off from the rest of the world and tell the oil-producing nations to go to hell is obviously appealing. The sad truth, however, is that it can't. Energy independence would make our problems worse, not better. It would raise our taxes, increase inflation, lower our standard of living, sap the strength of the entire economy, and endanger both public health and the environment. The hardship we have endured at OPEC's hands would be mild compared to the ill consequences of energy independence. Until we have a fuel that is cheaper and safer than oil, we're better off importing a large share of our energy supplies. OPEC has caused us all enough pain without our inflicting more on ourselves.

—Stephen Chapman

Reports & Comment Contributors

Pranay Gupte reports on African and other world affairs for the New York *Times*.

Stephen Chapman writes regularly on current political affairs for *The New Republic* and other magazines.

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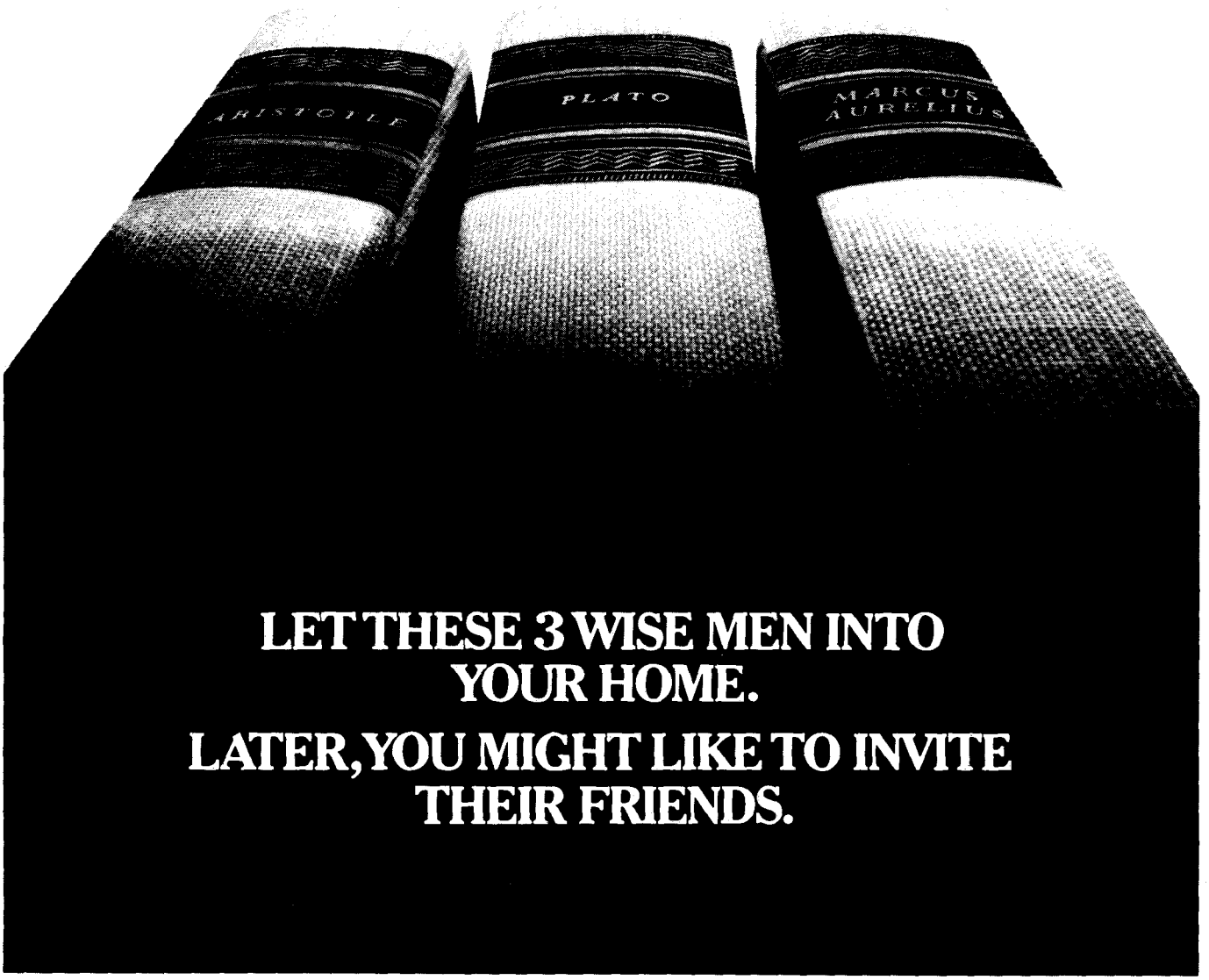

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PARTY OF ONE

A Skeptic's Voyage to China

by Thomas Griffith

Having now been to China, I know less about it. Journeying there has jarred my preconceptions—those casual assemblages, formed out of old movies, much journalism, desultory reading, atmosphere gained from novels and detective stories, and political prejudices. When China opened itself to wider Western tourism several years ago, I scorned the first starry-eyed travelers' reports for being as lopsided in their way as were those of the earlier polemicists who saw Communist China as a vast slave camp of blue ants. In 1980, 50,000 Americans visited China. Very few, I suspect, came back starry-eyed. Fascinated and unsettled is more like it.

Since I had been skeptical of earlier travelers, the skeptic's question has to be confronted first: How much of China does the foreigner get to see? Only about a hundred cities are open to outsiders; vast areas the size of American states are effectively off limits. Visitors usually travel around countryside and cities in tour buses, cocooned with their own kind, directed by young, cheerful, and bright English-speaking guides. But if one wants to skip the tour of the oil refinery, or the visit to still another Friendship store where tacky merchandise is available at inflated prices, one is free to wander the streets, observing daily life. One wishes every glance were a camera shot, so vivid are the crowded street scenes: thin old men pulling heavy carts of concrete slabs or Chinese cabbages; sidewalk shoe-menders sitting cross-legged; bamboo poles of fresh laundry extending from almost every shanty or apartment; Red Army girls in braids posing coyly in the park for a boyfriend's camera; and everywhere that symbol of a restless China on the move, the cyclists. In a nation of three work shifts, the bicycles have neither headlights nor taillights. In the dark one hears the constant, eerie, cricket sound of bicycle bells.

Eye contact with a Chinese stranger is likely to produce a smile—not servile, sycophantic, or dutiful, just human. A Potemkin could not stage such an unending show with a cast of thousands. In the course of three weeks the thousands of faces become a memorable and immensely sympathetic sight: a people hard used, enduring, resilient. This is not the gloomy and resentful atmosphere one feels in Russia. The hordes of Japanese tourists swarming over China look so much more unrelaxed than the quickly responsive Chinese; the Japanese are obviously well-off, the ordinary Chinese obviously not so, but the Chinese appear less stress-ridden. A difference in national temperament, or a Chinese resignation to what they cannot change and must endure? I find myself constantly asking traveling companions, or myself, unanswerable questions.

The visitor is hurried through the storied sights of China, and particularly through the most prized ones, such as the Great Wall, Peking's Forbidden City, Suzhou's gardens and canals, or, at Guilin, a boat trip threading through a spectacular river gorge surrounded by those humpbacked green hills I had seen on ancient Chinese scrolls and disbelieved. One longs to linger, but a new tour group is waiting. In its eagerness for foreign exchange, China is admitting more tourists than it can handle. Unlike a Hilton hotel, which can overbook and turn the overflow out to fend for itself, China each night must somehow house every tourist and tourist group it has taken in, so there are frequent and irritating changes of schedule, awakenings at 4:30 A.M. to get to a site too distant, or cancellations of plane flights resulting in long train journeys. Things aren't quite as planned, but everyone's trying. The tourist too becomes resigned.

The treasures of China's past that foreigners most want to see are somehow a reproach to the bleak, utilitarian Communist mentality. A vindictiveness toward the past has to account for the terrible destruction of the recent Cultural Revolution, whose yet uncounted depredations may match those of invading armies. Today's Chinese must not be seduced by beautiful reminders of their past, so visits to the empress dowager's summer palace or to the Ming tombs are accompanied by censorious strictures about their extravagance and social cost. "The Great Wall was built with the blood and sweat of the laboring people. It showed their resourcefulness and perseverance and how they were enslaved by the feudal emperors and kings." Luckily, the Great Wall itself so overwhelms the imagination that the propaganda is easily borne.

The contemporary achievements of communism, however, impress less by their quality than by the extent of the dedication to egalitarian simplicity. In an urban workers' commune for 60,000 people in Shanghai, the "typical" apartment is obviously a model; even so, the closet-sized kitchen, which four families share, is cramped and dismal. The surefire tourist attraction is the kindergarten, where children gravely salute visitors, shake hands, and jiggle a few dance steps with them—a rote performance made irresistible by the spontaneous vivacity of the kids.

Over the inevitable cup of tea, I ask the commune leader what would happen if someone wanted to live elsewhere; his answer is matter-of-fact but undercuts the benevolence of his earlier exposition: "He would have to find someone to trade with." In the People's Republic, coercion is not visible to the visitor's eye, but perhaps it doesn't have to be when everyone's movements and livelihood are so controlled.

Those ritual visits to craft factories—redeemed by the faces of the people—often leave an impression our hosts did not intend. The working conditions are probably better than those in factories we are not shown, but not elaborate. The demanding, detailed work is amazing. At an embroidery works, women sew with thread so thin it is almost invisible; every two hours they are given rest time to do exercises at acupuncture points above and below their eyes. But what disturbs is to see such exacting labor put to such trivial ends: kitschy kittens or pandas that would be too sticky for Disney; tedious hours spent embroidering copies of the nation's leaders, or postcardy ancient landscapes with an incongruous power dam or bridge in the foreground. So much craftsmanship, yet so little creativity.

Thomas Griffith's column appears every other month in *The Atlantic.*

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But by now, I think, our critical spirit has relaxed. The contrast between our two societies was so marked as to inhibit condescending comparisons. We were a People-to-People group of thirty-four Americans, mostly architects, mostly from Texas. Even in so short an immersion in the alien scene—away from the distractions and news of our own chaotic culture—we had begun to see China's problems in its own terms. Or perhaps I should speak for myself. Only a relentless totalitarianism—one that succeeds a more amateurish totalitarianism—could have unified this one fourth of mankind.

Don't ask me for any neat philosophical balancing of the good of the greatest number. I'm not qualified to judge whether the improvements in health and abysmal living standards of China's millions were purchased too dearly, at the cost of those more privileged Chinese who lost their lives and their goods when the Communists came to power, or at the cost of present freedom. What is not to be disputed is totalitarianism's staying power, even when it acts irrationally. It conquered cruelly, but in the name of an ideal, that of imposed equality. Undoubtedly the leaders live better than the others, but one does not, on short exposure, see here the blatant contrasts of privilege and poverty that so affront one in banana republics. Middle-level bureaucrats ride bicycles too. In meetings where everyone dresses alike, in clean white shirts or Mao jackets, it comes as a surprise to see someone otherwise unmarked in rank speak with obvious authority; one looks again and discovers in his or her face a calm assurance that had not been noticed before. In dress as in transportation, necessity excuses sameness. And I must confess to twinges of recognition, in such a spartan atmosphere, of how much our own culture is diverted and diminished by gimmicky distinctions and excesses of luxury and waste. It is my impression (But who can tell?) that many Chinese are convinced that they will gain only when everyone else does. This, as much as the lack of any political alternative, may account for the seeming passivity in the atmosphere. And just as likely it explains the widely recognized lack of incentive.

The architects in our group were privately scathing about Chinese plumbing (even in the best hotels, bathrooms smell noxiously of drains) and appalled by slovenly workmanship. They admired the enthusiastic planting of trees in the cities, but saw no Communist architecture that future times would wish to preserve or restore. However, in meetings with their Chinese opposite numbers—urban planners or architects at institutes and universities—they were politely discreet on these points. Perhaps they too were awed by the building job China faces: so much to do, such meager means. They were also drawn to the Chinese professionals we met. Most had suffered severely in the Cultural Revolution, their schools shut down, themselves or their colleagues often imprisoned or forced to labor in the fields, in the mad, ten-year effort to diminish the independence and power of the intellectuals. They could talk of so recent a nightmare with surprising candor so long as it was blamed on the Gang of Four, rather than recognized as a policy carried out by thousands who still occupy high places.

These intent, intelligent people had our sympathy, but did not beg for it. They could now familiarize themselves with Western architectural trends again, but did not expect to make much use of them. Goals were so different. When one American architect hoped that the Chinese would not move from bicycles to America's costly dependence on the automobile, the Chinese said not to worry. They had manufactured 10 million bicycles last year because bicycles are practical for short distances. By moving people out to the suburbs, nearer their work, by building shops and civic centers in those suburbs to keep them there, the Chinese would see to it that no one had far to travel. If natural trends can be resisted by fiat (But can they? The Chinese too seem unable to reject the lure of the cities), our experience was indeed not very relevant. The Chinese do have a long history of self-sufficient disregard of the rest of the world.

Though they are now bent on taking what they need from Western technology while filtering out the rest, a quirk of leadership could as easily send them in some other manic direction. Seeing those thousands of faces, it was impossible not to wish them well. As we headed out to Hong Kong, we recognized a feeling we had been ignoring in ourselves: claustrophobia. Hong Kong, that hustler's marketplace in a magnificent harbor setting, had always offended me with its garish greed. This time it attracted me, bringing me a simple delight in feeling free. ☐

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THE MAIL

IS TV GOOD FOR FIJI?

SIR: Bad enough that Barry Siegel ("The South Pacific: Some Enchanted Prime Time," September *Atlantic*) will be able to get a tax deduction for his trip to the Fiji Islands. That he should do so and be so wrong is unforgivable.

Siegel's argument is the typical one from Americans on vacation in Fiji. It is that they are a happy and contented people that will be well off if we just leave them alone and free from the corruptions of the industrialized world.

You would never know from Siegel's piece that the native Fijian is outnumbered in his own country by the descendants of indentured laborers from India that now totally dominate the commerce and sugar production of the country, and that, unlike other islanders in the Pacific, the Fijian must worry each day about becoming a minority in his own land. Or that the cities are full of alcoholism, unemployment, and crime caused by an influx of young people tired of village life and longing for movies, disco dancing, and cold beer.

Thus the real question is whether TV might make rural living more attractive to the young by bringing them the action and adventure films they love and now move to the cities to see.

DAVID A. WILLIAMS
Freeport, Maine

Barry Siegel replies:

I respect Mr. Williams's knowledge of Fiji, but I believe he has misread and simplified my report. My "argument" is not that Fijians "are a happy and contented people" who will do fine if left "free from the corruptions of the industrialized world." Fiji, as I reported, has already been touched by "the corruptions of the industrialized world," and this trend will continue with or without TV, fueled by such forces as a growing cash economy and travel. Clearly, TV can have a good or bad impact, and most likely both at the same time, but it doesn't necessarily "Westernize" a culture below the surface.

Beyond this misreading, Mr. Williams simply looks at this issue differently from the way I do. He seems to think TV might help solve everything in Fiji from alcoholism, boredom, and crime to the perpetual tension between the Fiji and Indian races. Others, as it happens, think TV *causes* precisely these problems. Undisputable proof either way is hard to come by.

Mr. Williams may rest assured I took no tax deduction.

CULT OF CANDOR

SIR: As an old Common Cause infighter, I was more amused than bemused by the tired arguments advanced by Warren Bennis ("The Cult of Candor," September *Atlantic*) against disclosure laws.

He forgets that at the time the New York *Times* was publishing the Pentagon Papers, Nixon's arrogant band of misanthropes was stifling all dissent in the name of "national security" and the *Times* faced the threat of prior restraint—a very real threat, as was later shown in the *Progressive* case.

The FBI's problems in responding to Freedom of Information Act requests are most certainly of its own making. And if Mr. Levi is troubled by the number of such requests, think of the trauma experienced by private citizens upon learning that this vaunted federal law enforcement agency was little better and in some cases much worse than the criminals it was trying to catch.

Bennis surely does not hope to win debating points by quoting the Supreme Court on secrecy. The Court is one of the most secrecy-shrouded institutions in the country.

The school board meeting in a secret pre-meeting and then announcing results in a "public meeting" is precisely what sunshine laws are all about. The ubiquitous use of such subterfuge brought about the passage of sunshine laws that are eliminating such doings.

FRED BLANTON
Fayetteville, Tenn.

Warren Bennis replies:

Without intending to do so, Mr. Blanton's response supports my thesis that much of the legislation created to foster openness has done the opposite. To take only one specific, Blanton blithely supports the so-called "sunshine laws" and claims that the deceit (and even, in some cases, illegal practices) "is precisely what sunshine laws are all about." Either Mr. Blanton doesn't understand what he wrote or he doesn't understand what I wrote. Either way, I suspect that the chief difference between Blanton's position and the one I took in "The Cult of Candor" has to do less with the *principle* of openness than with the means by which we achieve this goal. Blanton seems to support whatever legislation supports this principle, while I tend to assess the results. That is really what my article was all about: the unanticipated results of laws that do the opposite of what they purport.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

SIR: In his article "Energy Conservation" (October *Atlantic*), Peter H. Stone refers to cogeneration as a conservation secret and calls for government policies and incentives to encourage cogeneration. Apparently unbeknownst to Mr.

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Stone, such incentives already exist. The Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act of 1978 requires utilities to interconnect with, purchase electricity from, and sell electricity to qualifying cogenerators at reasonable and nondiscriminatory rates. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission regulations are designed to insure that the rate a utility must pay to purchase the electricity will be higher than the cost to the cogenerator of producing the electricity.

CYNTHIA L. PAULICH
Los Angeles, Calif.

SIR: Peter Stone's article was challenging to all Americans. Unfortunately, he neglected to point out the possible negative effects of making houses "leakproof." The Department of Energy built experimental houses that could be heated/cooled with a minimum of energy—but they were unhealthy for the inhabitants. Michael Gold wrote an article, in *Science 80*, March/April 1980, on the toxic substances that accumulate in airtight houses. Does Mr. Stone have any suggestions for solving this problem?

BARBARA MARSHALL
Silver Spring, Md.

Peter H. Stone replies:

Ms. Marshall raises a good point that should be considered by anyone retrofitting his or her home. The Princeton house doctors are also aware of the radiation dangers of airtight or "overtight" houses and have emphasized that this should be avoided in retrofitting. Attention has to be paid to maintaining a healthy air exchange rate with adequate ventilation. To offset any additional loss of heat, the house doctors suggest the use of heat recovery systems, which are now commercially available for about $200.

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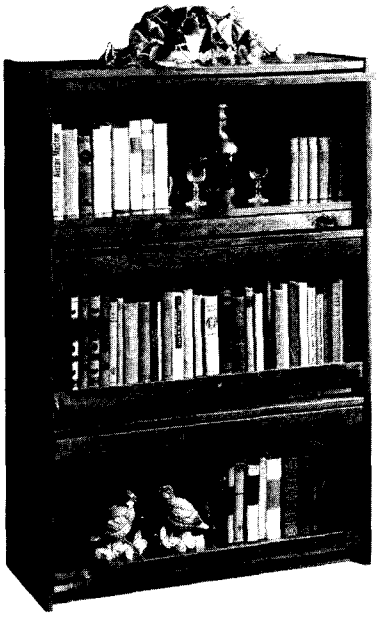

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CEASE THIS MADNESS

by George F. Kennan

In the eyes of the former ambassador to Moscow, the two superpowers have reached a moment of unparalleled tension and danger. Can they turn away from the irrationalities of the arms race?

When I glance back over the past fifty years, it seems evident that the East–West relationship has been burdened by certain unique factors that lie in the very nature of the respective societies. When it comes to describing these factors, permit me—so far as the Western side is concerned—to confine myself to my own society.

I have no doubt that there are a number of habits, customs, and uniformities of behavior, all deeply ingrained in the American tradition, that complicate for others the conduct of relations with the American government. There is, for example, the extensive fragmentation of authority throughout our government—a fragmentation that often makes it hard for a foreign representative to know who speaks for the American government as a whole. There is the absence of any collective Cabinet responsibility, or indeed of any system of mutual responsibility between the executive and legislative branches of government. There are the large powers exercised, even in matters that affect foreign relations, by state, local, or private authorities with which the foreign representative cannot normally deal. There is the susceptibility of the political establishment to the emotions and vagaries of public opinion, particularly in this day of confusing interaction between the public and the various commercialized mass media. There is the inordinate influence exercised over American foreign policy by individual lobbies and other organized minorities. And there is the extraordinary difficulty a democratic society experiences in taking a balanced view of any other country that has acquired the image of a military and political enemy—the tendency, that is, to dehumanize that image, to oversimplify it, to ignore its complexities. Democratic societies do very poorly in coping, philosophically, with the phenomenon of serious challenge and hostility to their values.

In the light of these conditions, I can well understand that dealing with our government can be a frustrating experience at times for any foreign representative. I regret these circumstances, as do some other Americans. They constitute one of the reasons I personally advocate a more modest, less ambitious American foreign policy than do many of my compatriots.

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But these conditions flow from the very nature of our society, and they are not likely to be significantly changed at any early date.

When we look at the Soviet regime, we also encounter a series of customs and habits, equally deeply rooted in history and weighing heavily on the external relationships of that regime. These, strangely enough, seem to have been inherited much less from the models of the recent Petersburg epoch than from those of the earlier Grand Duchy of Muscovy. And they have found a remarkable reinforcement in some of the established traditions of Leninist Marxism itself: in its high sense of orthodoxy, its intolerance for contrary opinion, its tendency to identify ideological dissent with moral perversity, its ingrained distrust of the heretical outsider.

One example is the extraordinary passion for secrecy in all governmental affairs—a passion that prevents the Soviet authorities from revealing to outsiders even those aspects of their own motivation that, if revealed, would be reassuring to others. Excessive secrecy tends, after all, to invite excessive curiosity, and thus serves to provoke the very impulses against which it professes to guard.

Along with this passion for secrecy goes a certain conspiratorial style and tradition of decision-making, particularly within the Party—a practice that may have its internal uses but often inspires distrust. And there is the extraordinary espionomania that appears to pervade so much of Soviet thinking. Espionage is a minor nuisance, I suppose, to most governments. But nowhere, unless it be in Albania, is the preoccupation with it so intense as it appears to be in the Soviet Union. This is surprising, for one would expect to encounter it, if anywhere, in a weak and precariously situated state, not in one of the world's greatest and most secure military powers.

The foreigner who has to deal with the Soviet government often has the impression of being confronted, in rapid succession, with two quite disparate, and not easily reconcilable, Soviet personalities: one, a correct and reasonably friendly personality, which would like to see the relationship assume a normal, relaxed, and agreeable form; the other, a personality marked by a suspiciousness so dark and morbid, so sinister in its implications, as to constitute in itself a form of hostility. I sometimes wonder whether the Soviet leaders ever realize how much they damage their own interests by their cultivation of it.

George F. Kennan served for more than twenty-five years as a United States career diplomat, and has written many books on the Soviet Union. This essay is drawn from an address he delivered in October to the Second World Congress on Soviet and East European Studies, held in Garmisch, Germany.

There is no justification for the maintenance of armed forces on a scale that envisages the total destruction of an entire people.

Finally, there is the habit of polemic exaggeration and distortion, carried often to the point of denial of the obvious and solemn assertion of the absurd—a habit that has offended and antagonized a host of foreigners, and to which even some of the old-timers find it hard to accustom themselves.

These, then, are what I might call the permanent complications of the East–West relationship. There have been others, less permanent but even more serious.

The first, and the one that marked the relationship throughout much of the 1920s and 1930s, was the world-revolutionary commitment of the early Leninist regime, with its accompanying expression in rhetoric and activity. It is true that the period of the intensive pursuit of world revolution was brief. As early as 1921, aims of this nature were already ceasing to enjoy the highest priority in the policies of the Kremlin. Their place was being taken by concern with the preservation of the regime and the agricultural and industrial development of the country. But world-revolutionary rhetoric remained substantially unchanged throughout the twenties and much of the thirties; and Moscow continued to maintain in the various Western countries small factions of local Communist followers over whom it exerted the strictest discipline, whom it endeavored to use as instruments for the pursuit of its policies, and whose unquestioning loyalty it demanded even when this conflicted with loyalty to their own governments. So unusual were these practices, and so disturbing to Western governments and publics, that they formed the main cause for the high degree of tension between Russia and the West.

With the triumph of Hitler in Germany, however, an important change occurred. Beginning about 1935, the menace of Hitler began to loom larger in Western eyes than did the ideological differences with Soviet communism or the resentment of world-revolutionary activities. The result was that the Soviet Union came to be viewed in the West no longer primarily from the standpoint of its hostility to Western capitalism but rather from the standpoint of its relationship to Nazi Germany.

And this had several confusing consequences. For one thing, it tended to obscure from the attention of the Western public the full savagery of the Stalinist purges of the late 1930s. But then, after 1941 the

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common association of the Western powers with the Soviet Union in the war against Germany gave rise to sentimental enthusiasms in the West and to unreal hopes of a happy and constructive postwar collaboration with Soviet Russia. It was this factor, as the war came to an end, that brought the various Western statesmen to accept without serious remonstrance not only the recovery by the Soviet Union of those border areas of the former Russian empire that had been lost at the time of the Revolution but also the establishment of a virtual Soviet military-political hegemony over the remainder of the eastern half of the European continent; in other words, a geopolitical change of historic dimensions, bound to complicate the restoration, in the postwar years, of anything resembling a really stable balance of power.

It was not surprising that when the war came to an end, and people in the West turned to the construction of a new world order, a reaction set in. There was a sudden realization that the destruction of Germany's armed power and the effective cession to the Soviet Union of a vast area of military deployment in the very heart of the continent had left Western Europe highly vulnerable to a Soviet military attack, or at least to heavy military-political pressures from the Soviet side. Added to this was the growing realization that with the establishment of Communist regimes, subservient to Moscow, in the various Eastern European countries, the relations of those countries with the West had become subject to the same limiting factors that already operated in relations with the Soviet Union. Then came the Korean War—a conflict in which, though Soviet forces were not actually involved, people in the West soon came to see a further manifestation of Soviet aggressiveness. And it was just at this time that the nuclear weapon began to cast its baleful shadow over the entire world, stirring up the fear, confusion, and defensive panic that were bound to surround a weapon of such apocalyptic—indeed, suicidal—implications.

The death of Stalin, the establishment of the dominant position of Khrushchev, and the accompanying relaxations in Soviet policy gave rise to new hopes for the peaceful resolution of East–West differences. Although Khrushchev was crude, he wanted no war; and he believed in human communication. But he overplayed his hand. And such favorable prospects as his influence presented went largely without response in the West. The compulsions of military competition and military thinking were already too powerful.

For, during this entire period, Soviet leaders persisted in the traditional Russian tendency to go too far in the cultivation of military strength, particularly conventional strength. They continued to maintain along their western borders, as their czarist predecessors had done before them, forces numerically greater than anyone else could see the need for. And the situation was not made better by the tendency of Western strategists and military leaders to exaggerate the strength of these forces, with a view to wheedling larger military appropriations out of their own reluctant parliaments, or by the tendency of the Western media to dramatize these exaggerations as a means of capturing public attention.

The Americans, meanwhile, unable to accommodate to the recognition that the long-range nuclear missile had rendered their country no longer defensible, threw themselves headlong into the nuclear arms race, followed at every turn by the Russians. In the U-2 episode and the Cuban missile crisis, the two great nuclear powers traded fateful mistakes, further confirming each other's conviction that armed force, and armed force alone, would eventually determine the outcome of their differences. Out of all these ingredients was brewed the immensely disturbing and tragic situation in which we find ourselves today: anxious competition in the development of new armaments; blind dehumanization of the prospective adversary; systematic distortion of that adversary's motivation and intentions; steady displacement of political considerations by military ones in the calculations of statesmanship; in short, a dreadful militarization of the entire East–West relationship.

This moral and political cul-de-sac represents a basic change, as compared with the first two decades of Soviet power, in the source of East–West tensions. It is not the capacity of the Kremlin for promoting social revolution in other countries that is feared and resented. Rather, the Soviet Union is seen primarily as an aggressive military menace.

But there is no rational reason for the militarization of the Cold War. Neither side wants a third world war. Neither side sees in such a war a promising means of advancing its interests. The West has no intention of attacking the Soviet Union. The Soviet leadership, I am satisfied, has no intention of attacking Western Europe. The interests of the two sides conflict, to be sure, at a number of points. Experience has proven, most unfortunately, that in smaller and more remote conflicts, where the stakes are less than total, armed force on a limited scale might still continue to play a certain role, whether we like it or not. The United States has used its armed forces in this manner three times since World War II: in Lebanon, in the Dominican Republic, and in Vietnam. The Soviet Union now does likewise in Afghanistan. I am not entertaining, by these remarks, the chimera of a total world disarma-

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ment. But for the maintenance of armed forces on a scale that envisages the total destruction of an entire people there is no rational justification. Such a practice can flow only from fear, and irrational fear at that. It can reflect no positive aspirations, and it is dangerous.

No one will understand the danger we are all in today unless he recognizes that governments in this modern world have not yet learned how to create and cultivate great military establishments, particularly those that include the weapons of mass destruction, without becoming the servants rather than the masters of what they have created. Modern history offers no example of the cultivation by rival powers of armed force on a huge scale that did not in the end lead to an outbreak of hostilities. And there is no reason to believe that we are greater, or wiser, than our ancestors. It would take a very strong voice, indeed a powerful chorus of voices, from the outside, to say to the decision-makers of the two superpowers what should be said to them:

"For the love of God, of your children, and of the civilization to which you belong, cease this madness. You have a duty not just to the generation of the present; you have a duty to civilization's past, which you threaten to render meaningless, and to its future, which you threaten to render nonexistent. You are mortal men. You are capable of error. You have no right to hold in your hands—there is no one wise enough and strong enough to hold in his hands—destructive powers sufficient to put an end to civilized life on a great portion of our planet. No one should wish to hold such powers. Thrust them from you. The risks you might thereby assume are not greater—could not be greater—than those which you are now incurring for us all."

But where is the voice powerful enough to say it?

There is a very special tragedy in this weapons race. It is tragic because it creates the illusion of a total conflict of interest between the two societies. It tends to conceal the fact that both of these societies are today confronted with internal problems never envisaged in the ideologies that originally divided them. In part, I am referring to environmental problems: the question whether great industrial societies can learn to exist without polluting, exhausting, and thus destroying the natural resources essential to their very existence. These are not only problems common to the two ideological worlds; they are ones the solution of which requires each other's collaboration, not each other's enmity.

But there are deeper problems—social, and even moral and spiritual—that increasingly affect all the highly industrialized, urbanized, and technologically advanced societies. What is involved here is essentially the question of how life is to be given an adequate meaning, how the quality of life and experience is to be assured for the individual citizen in the highly artificial and overcomplicated social environment that modern technology has created. Neither we in the West nor they in the East are doing well in the solution of these problems. We are both failing—each in our own way. If one wants an example of this, one has to look only at our respective failures in our approach to teenage youth. The Russians demoralize their young people by giving them too little freedom. We demoralize ours by giving them too much. Neither system finds itself able to provide them with the leadership and inspiration and guidance needed to realize their potential as individuals and to meet the responsibilities the future is inevitably going to place upon them.

And this is only one point at which we are failing. Neither here nor there is the direction of society really under control. We are all being swept along, in our fatuous pride, by currents we do not understand and over which we have no command. And we will not protect ourselves from the resulting dangers by continuing to pour great portions of our substance, year after year, into the instruments of military destruction. On the contrary, we will only be depriving ourselves, by this prodigality, of the resources essential for any hopeful attack on these profound emerging problems.

The present moment is in many respects a crucial one. Not for thirty years has political tension reached so dangerous a point as it has attained today. Not in all this time has there been so high a degree of misunderstanding, of suspicion, of bewilderment, and of sheer military fear.

The United States and possibly the Soviet Union will see extensive changes in governmental leadership this year. Will the new leaders be able to reverse these trends?

Two things, as I see it, would be necessary to make possible this transition.

First, statesmen on both sides should take their military establishments in hand and insist that these become the servants, not the masters and determinants, of political action. Both sides must learn to accept the fact that only in the reduction, not in the multiplication, of existing monstrous arsenals can the true security of any nation be found.

But beyond this, we must learn to recognize the gravity of the social, environmental, and even spiritual problems that assail us all in this unreal world of the machine, the television screen, and the computer. We and our Marxist friends must work together in finding hopeful responses to these insidious and ultimately highly dangerous problems. □

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SAINTS

A story by William Trevor

I received a telegram which simply said, *Josephine is dying. Hospital of St. Bernadette,* it was signed, followed by the name of the city where I knew Josephine still lived because of the postmarks on the envelopes of her Christmas cards. The nun who sent the message must have known it wouldn't be necessary to be more precise, and she was right: when I tried to recall Josephine's other name I couldn't.

I experienced a feeling of pleasure after I'd read the message: she must have asked for me, else why would the telegram have been sent? It was quite unlike me to want to go to her, I who am so lost in the world of Bellini and Ghirlandaio and who prefer its calmness to the pain of life. The desire to make the journey was bewildering in its strangeness, but I am old now and don't always unravel puzzles. My life, as Josephine's was then, is almost over and I cannot much complain. I have indulged myself with women and with music and the marvels of the Italian Renaissance. I indulge myself still, as best I can, continuing to redress a balance.

Yet in the years that passed I often thought of Josephine, even without the reminder of her Christmas cards. When the telegram came I knew she was seventy-eight because I was sixty-nine, but of course I had no idea what she looked like now. I'm nothing much to look at myself, a bald scalp browned by the sun, like a wrinkled crab, I sometimes think. I am thin and of medium height, dressed almost always in the same way: linen trousers and a pale fawn shirt, occasionally with a tie and linen jacket. I seem to have acquired an endless range of these clothes, which are returned from the laundry in a green cardboard box, delivered to my house. I shop for food and wine, and when I'm too old for that I know that arrangements can be made, for these shopkeepers have profited well from me and are humane people. I walk with a stick, more for company than anything else. On the tip of its curved handle there is a silver knob with a pattern of entwined rose leaves on it.

I went immediately when the telegram came. I packed a small white suitcase and from Sansepolcro, where I live now, I took the Arezzo bus, not even pausing to look up the trains from Arezzo to Pisa. Some time that day, or early the next day, there would be a plane to London, and then another delay, waiting for a flight to Cork. On the bus I kept imagining I was going to be too late, and all the time I thought about the dying woman. "She's Josephine," my mother had said. "She has come instead of Kitty."

Kitty had been sacked for some misdemeanor or other, smoking in her bedroom or having a follower in the kitchen, perhaps breaking something. I can hardly remember Kitty, except that she wasn't pretty like Josephine. I was ten when my mother walked into the garden at Kilneagh with Josephine, passing through the French windows of the breakfast room. Josephine had become nineteen the very week before although I didn't know it then.

The bus moved slowly through sunshine and the soft

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spring landscape of Umbria. The first green shoots decorated the vines on either side of the road; new growth freshened the olive branches. I never liked going back, or going anywhere that was not in Italy: it seemed preposterous to be leaving behind my Canary roses, my irises and wisteria. Yet even more urgently as I progressed on it I wanted to make the journey.

There had been only one other servant at Kilneagh, Mrs. Flynn, who did the cooking. There were of course the gardeners, O'Neill and his son John Paddy, and there was Hannah, who came from the village once a week to do the sheets and clothes and to scrub the kitchen floor. But Josephine bore the brunt of the work in the house, blacking grates and shining brass, waiting at table, endlessly sweeping. "She's always in a hurry in the morning," my father used to say, laughing at her in his good-natured way. "She has time for singing after two o'clock." In her blue morning uniform she would hasten from task to task as if the day didn't have enough hours; but in her afternoon black it was not the thing to hurry with the tea tray, or ever to seem flurried when callers unexpectedly arrived. I can see her now, entering the drawing room in the way she'd been trained to, placing the tray on the table by the fire, returning twice with plates of sandwiches and cake, hot water in a silver jug. Her hair was black and smooth beneath her housemaid's cap, coiled about her head for tidiness. Her eyes had the same darkness about them, so deeply blue that when the light was dim the blue was lost; her lips had a natural pout, never touched with makeup. The fragility of her face might have been reflected in her hands, but they were coarsened by the work she did, chapped and raw, their ugliness seeming to insist that beauty had been visited on her in error.

At Pisa the airport was on strike. No planes, Alitalia or otherwise, were likely to take off that day, and when I made enquiries I was told flights could not be guaranteed for several days to come. That evening I took the Rome Express to Paris, lucky to get a berth in a single compartment. It was due in Paris just before half past ten the next morning; with good fortune I'd be in Ireland by the afternoon.

I ate pasta in brodo and scallopini, staring out at orange-tiled roofs and ocher walls. The evening sun had slipped away; at La Spezia the lights were on. I sat there with that pleasant feeling of being hurried through stations where lesser trains stopped; I drank a liter of Brolio, and ordered grappa with my coffee. Years ago, on a journey somewhere, I discovered that the jolting of an all-night train assists the liver. I think about the liver because the Italians do, though less perhaps than the French. In national terms, I've become a nothing person, an old man exiled in Sansepolcro, gardening for the love of it.

Had the dying woman gardened in old age too? And what, come to that, had her life been since we had said good-bye? I had often wondered. I'd never had an address to return her Christmas greetings to, yet always in Sansepolcro her card arrived at the very beginning of December, the unpracticed handwriting, the same unattractive mess of snow and holly. And always it brought with it the mystery of how she had discovered my whereabouts.

I didn't cease to think about her as we rattled through Turin and Modane, half dreaming, half remembering. Tweeded and comfortable, my father read the *Irish Times* at breakfast, very much the Irish seigneur. I sat at the far end of the table from him, with my sisters on either side of me, and Josephine's footfall was as delicate as a cobweb in the breakfast room. Quietly my mother thanked her for the fresh jug of coffee she had brought. No one ever disturbed the reading of the *Irish Times*.

"Ah well," my father said at last, his tone revealing that the news did not seem good. It was difficult to make my father melancholy or ever to upset his humor, but the newspaper at breakfast time sometimes did so. When his voice broke the silence my sisters, younger than I was, argued in whispers about the raspberry jam. My mother received the newspaper and frowned before she read it.

"Not so promising," my father said.

"I wish they'd stop."

"They won't stop, dear."

"But surely it's all right now?"

"They can't agree."

The year was probably 1920 or '21; it isn't easy to be accurate. My father admired Michael Collins and had had him in the house, talking for hours in the dark little room we called the office. I can imagine them now: one on either side of my father's desk, in leather armchairs, Josephine coming in with more water for their whiskey. Or had my father once said that Michael Collins didn't drink whiskey? I can't remember that either, but I do recall that my father always had his water warm.

On the Rome Express I dreamed that Josephine held open the hall door and Michael Collins stepped in from between the high pillars of the porch. Other people were with him, men who remained outside in a car, to whom Josephine later carried bottles of stout and glasses. My dream may have been only a repetition of reality, for when I recall it now there's a vividness

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about the scene that doesn't quite belong with remembered dreams: the silver tray with the bottles of stout, Josephine's shyness with the men, my father's hand outstretched to grasp his visitors'. From the top of the stairs I seem to watch, and again from the window of my bedroom. There's an old-fashioned motorcar, the men's boots crunch the gravel. There are voices, then the noise of the motorcar driving away.

At Paris I took a taxi all the way to Orly, unpacking an overcoat from my white suitcase as we drove, for the weather was colder in France. There was a wait of two hours before the flight to Dublin; no flight to Cork until the evening. Flying direct to Cork would have been as quick as making a train connection in Dublin, but there was something more satisfactory about the urgency of moving instead of just sitting there. An old woman might take a long time to die, not quite yet ready to depart her life, but that assumed a choice in the matter, which only sometimes there was. In my haste I hadn't sent a reply to the telegram to indicate that I was making the journey. I did so just before I boarded my flight at Orly.

Now and again in the past I have had to return to Ireland, for under my father's will the capital I inherited must remain there. I inherited land as well: decisions had occasionally to be made. But never in all my years of exile had I returned for reasons of humanity. "Tell him I am dying," had she said? And had the nuns rooted among her belongings for the mysteriously acquired address in Italy? Had they wondered who he was, she being too weak to tell them? She would be gentle in old age, I thought, and perhaps her hands might have lost their chapped rawness. "Yes, please," I replied to the pretty, green-clad air hostess. "I think a little whiskey, please." Reassuringly, she smiled down at me, because the old are sometimes nervous in the air. "Jameson," she murmured, caressing me with that familiar name. In Sansepolcro I drink only wine, though sometimes, I admit, a lot of that.

Josephine might have married. The annual Christmas card had never said so, but then it had never said anything except *From Josephine*. I imagined her keeping house in some modest place, married to a laborer or a lorry driver, with a long family of children, a struggle through the years to make ends meet, the tired face of an Irish wife and mother. I imagined her sitting in the doorway of a cottage shelling peas in the sunshine, contented after all. I imagined her on a holiday at Dunmore East, regarded with admiration by strangers because of her beauty. But none of it, I knew, was true. There was some different life that Josephine had had. "Yes, please, another," I ordered from the Aer Lingus girl, and soon after that she brought me a little plastic tray of lunch, with which I drank quite pleasant Burgundy.

There was a wintry chill in Ireland, although the fields were richly green with the same spring I had left behind in Umbria. The flat plain the Cork train passed over brought back another sheaf of memories: I had made this journey often, home from school, though not to Kilneagh because I had been too young to go away to school from Kilneagh. It was to the house in Cork I had returned, to my mother and Josephine. Josephine always met me at the station, and saw to my luggage until I was older and didn't want her to. "How's my mother?" I would ask, and she would say my mother was the same.

At school in the Dublin mountains, a school which people called an outpost of the empire, I wore a maroon House tie and achieved distinction on the cricket field. But I was noted there for another reason: I had the best story to tell of any boy of my time. Who else had witnessed the crash of burning timbers as the grand house tumbled into its own fire; who else had seen so many people die? Boys paid me, when I grew tired of telling it over again, a penny for all the details. I used to linger over them, making the most of the life there'd been at Kilneagh: stout and scarlet-cheeked Mrs. Flynn in the kitchen, scolding Hannah because she talked too much while she did the washing; the gnarled old face of O'Neill as he crept among the flower beds, crippled with arthritis; John Paddy setting traps for mice among the bean rows. My sisters were always arguing, I said; my father laughed easily. I never described my mother or Josephine, because they of course were still alive.

The train stopped at a station in Co. Leix. It hadn't changed much, but the town beyond it looked different: huge sheds with tractors and agricultural implements displayed in front of them, a factory on a hill. Mrs. Flynn had come from these midland parts; her husband had been a Corkman but had died of a kidney complaint, which was why she had found herself cooking for us at Kilneagh. In moments when she wasn't cross she would speak about her girlhood and call the town she'd come from a pretty place, though she had never been back there. When I was very young I used to wonder why O'Neill and Mrs. Flynn weren't married to one another. "But why ever would they be?" Josephine protested, laughing and hugging me. There was a party once my parents gave, tea in the garden for fifty people one sunny afternoon, and someone's dog had a fit. Josephine and my mother and father handed round the sandwiches and cakes, and after tea people stayed drinking until it became quite dusk. "The excitement, I suppose," Josephine said when I asked her why the dog had had a fit.

In Cork there was a wait of nearly a quarter of an hour before a taxi was available. I spent the time drinking more John Jameson because I felt I needed it. How

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could I soberly arrive at a strange hospital in this city we'd come to after the tragedy? I had wandered alone through Cork as a child, from our bleak house on St. Patrick's Hill down to the shops, where people seemed happy. I had watched the sea gulls scavenging in the docks, and sometimes old seamen would talk to me, telling me of their voyages, mentioning Cadiz and New York and Amsterdam. A priest once asked me why I was always alone, and I said it was because we did not belong in the house on the hill, that once we had lived near a village where my friends were. "And have you no brothers or sisters?" the priest asked me. "My sisters died," I said, and then I told him, the first person I ever told, long before my story became famous at the school in the Dublin mountains.

"Ah, the traffic's shocking these days," the taxi driver said. "Shocking altogether." I had asked him to be as quick about the journey as he could. "I understand," he replied, and I could feel him guessing what was at stake, since we were going to a hospital. Involuntarily he crossed himself.

"I haven't been to Cork for forty years," I said.

"You'd find it changed, sir."

"I used to live here."

"Is that so, sir? You don't sound like a Corkman. I took you for a stranger, sir."

"I've become a stranger."

"It wasn't much of a place, I'd say, forty years ago?"

"I remember it as thriving. The docks were always busy."

"It's thriving now, all right. You can't see yourself for tourists. The Yanks love Cork."

"I can imagine that."

"There's a few, sir, put off by the trouble up in the North. There's a confusion that we might be affected down here. But there's not so many like that."

"I've read about the trouble."

"Where're you living now, sir?"

"In a town called Sansepolcro. In Italy."

"I was never in Italy."

"I've been there ever since I left here."

"You'd not come back, sir?"

"No, I'd not come back."

The hospital was of gray, unpainted concrete, dominated by a white cross. In a carpark grotto there was a statue of the Virgin, with flowers in jam jars on a ledge by her feet. An old woman knelt in prayer.

"Good luck so, sir," the taxi driver said as I paid him, a form of farewell rather than the wish the words implied. I carried my suitcase through glass swing doors and spoke to a nun at a reception desk. The surface beneath my feet was highly polished parquet that stretched away to other swing doors and beyond them, becoming a corridor. The reception area was enormous, with chairs against cream-colored walls, and a cross on the wall above the nun's desk.

"Please wait a moment," she said, smiling with practiced, hospital sensitivity: a comforting or a joyful smile, you could take it as circumstances dictated. "Take a seat now till I find out."

I sat among other people, all of them silent, men and

women of different ages, two small children. The nun spoke into a telephone but I couldn't hear what she said. The man beside me took a packet of cigarettes from his pocket and then remembered there were signs requesting one not to smoke.

"Please come with me," another nun said, and I followed her through the second set of doors, down the long corridor.

"I'm not too late, Sister?"

"No, you're not too late."

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Josephine was in a dusky room with rosary beads on the table close to her. She was propped up on pillows with her eyes closed, a crucifix on the wall above her. A young nun sat by her bed.

"I'll leave you with Sister Power," the nun who'd brought me whispered, and Sister Power rose from the bedside. Without making a sound except for the rustle of her habit, she crossed the room to where I was standing and led me out into the corridor again. We stood a foot or two from the door, speaking in murmurs.

"She was brought in a week ago," she said. "They thought at St. Fina's she might have pneumonia and would need our care."

"St. Fina's?"

"Where she was."

"And has she pneumonia?"

"No, just a little cold. But she's sinking all the time. I'm glad you've come."

"There were delays. I'm sorry."

"She'll wake in a little while. Would you like a cup of tea, or coffee?"

I shook my head, but even so Sister Power halted a nun who was passing. "I'm sorry," she said to me, "but I'm going to ask you to do something. It could upset her when she wakes up if you smell of drink. I'm going to ask you to take a mouthwash."

It was strange to have that said so firmly to me by someone so young, to have the implication that I drink more than I should passed over because it was of no interest. Sister Power returned to her duty at the bedside, and I accompanied the other nun to a small room where medicines were kept. I felt humiliated, sitting there while she poured something into a glass. "Don't mind," she said, as if what was happening was quite usual.

I washed my mouth out and spat into a basin, and then drank some water. I kept thinking of Josephine as she had been, of her bedroom among the attics at Kilneagh, next to Mrs. Flynn's. When Josephine came to clear away the dinner dishes no one stopped talking because Josephine was a shadow, even though we were fond of her. In Kilneagh her presence on the stairs or in the hall was always associated with work. She rose before the family did and lit the range, and then the fire in the drawing room and the one in the breakfast room. At breakfast time she looked as if she had never been to bed but had simply changed from her black into her morning blue. Not that she seemed tired, of course, because it wasn't her place to seem tired. Yet here I was, at sixty-nine, washing my mouth out for her.

"Thank you," the nun said, and then led me back to where Josephine was propped up. Sister Power nodded to me, indicating with a nun's gesture a wooden chair on the other side of the bed. I sat down and for the first time I examined the old woman's face. All the beauty had gone. It was a thin face, thinner and more wrinkled than my own, lifeless because her eyes were still closed. The gray hair was scanty, brown blotches marked the skin of the forehead. But on the white candlewick bedspread her hands were not as I remembered them: the skin was marked with elderly freckles also, but the rawness caused by work had gone.

"Well," she said, her eyes abruptly opening. "Well."

Behind a glaze of weariness the same deep blueness still lurked in the depths of them. Her fingers twitched on the candlewick, her lips slightly parted.

"You have a visitor, Josephine."

The old woman looked at me. "It's a fast day, ma'am," she said. "An egg will do me, I can't eat meat today."

The eyes closed, and after a moment opened again. She stared ahead of her, between Sister Power and myself, at the blank wall opposite her bed.

"A visitor," Sister Power repeated, and made her nun's gesture in my direction.

"Not even a funeral," Josephine said. "They wouldn't even give her that."

She was speaking of my mother, who hadn't had a funeral because she'd taken her own life. In the house on St. Patrick's Hill she had sat for years by a window, watching the people of Cork pass by, and then one day she had cut her wrists with a razor blade. "I have a thing to get in Lester's," she said to Josephine, who was pleased my mother was going out because she rarely did. When she returned she locked her bedroom door, and men had to be summoned to break it down. Exactly, to the day, it was ten years after the tragedy at Kilneagh. And I was old enough, my mother must have estimated, to be on my own.

"Kilneagh," Josephine said. Tears oozed from the corners of her eyes and I could tell from the contortion in her face that she was remembering not just my mother's suicide but my sisters and my father burnt alive, and Mrs. Flynn burnt also. The fire had started in the middle of the night and we had all been trapped except O'Neill and John Paddy, who lived in a house in the yard, though they always ate in the kitchen. They had hauled us out as best they could, but only my mother and Josephine and myself survived. We had not been murdered when the men returned because we were not conscious, but O'Neill and John Paddy, faced by the men, were instantly shot. After my mother's burial, ten years later, Josephine said to me: "You and I are what's left of it now."

She spoke again on her deathbed, an unhappy whimpering that sounded senseless. "I'll sell the house, Josephine," I'd said after my mother's death. "I can't live

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in Ireland now." She had understood. Ever since the burning of Kilneagh her life had consisted of offering what consolation she could to my mother, making the grief bearable for her. But my mother had never really borne it, and who could blame her? "I don't know where I'll go," I said, aware that I would not be short of money, and before I left I made provision for Josephine.

"Dear Mary, console them," she whispered.

Sister Power placed the rosary beads between Josephine's fingers, but Josephine didn't appear to notice. I suddenly remembered what St. Fina's was: a lunatic asylum on the Bandon road.

"Console them everywhere," she said. "Console them."

Her eyes closed again.

"She's asleep," Sister Power said.

She pressed a bell beside the bed and after a minute or so another nun came in. Sister Power asked her to take her place by the bedside and then nodded to me. I left my white suitcase in the room and followed her down the corridor to an office that had another crucifix in it, small and black, hanging between two windows. There was a picture of the Sacred Heart as well, and a plaster image of the Virgin.

"I'm going to have some coffee myself," Sister Power said, plugging in an electric kettle. "I hope we did right with that telegram?"

"Yes, of course."

"Would you like some coffee too?"

"Yes, I would, please."

She opened a cupboard and took a tin containing biscuits from it. She placed blue cups and saucers on the desk, among the papers and wire trays. She found sugar and a tin of instant milk in the cupboard also.

"We didn't know whether to send for you or not. She mentioned you repeatedly one day, all day long, and then we discovered your name typed on a piece of paper, with your address in Italy. Italy must be lovely, is it?"

"Yes, I like it."

"Well, we just thought we'd tell you that she wasn't going to last."

"She was a maid in my parents' house before it was burnt down in the Troubles. Afterward she took care of my mother here in Cork."

"They've never known much about her at St. Fina's."

"How long has she been there?"

"A long time: 1932."

"My God!"

"Please . . ."

"I'm sorry, Sister. My mother killed herself in 1932. It was then that I left Ireland."

"I don't think she was unhappy at St. Fina's. They speak of her with great affection. They ring up every day now that she's here."

The kettle boiled. In silence Sister Power made the instant coffee. She didn't seem to mind these silences that occurred.

"But she is mad?" I asked her.

"Oh, yes."

There was another silence, then Sister Power stirred her coffee with a white plastic spoon. She sipped a little. I explained that Josephine sent me a Christmas card every year, that I had never understood how she'd found out my address. Sister Power said:

"Among the inmates at St. Fina's she is thought to be a saint."

"A saint?"

"She hardly ever ceased to pray. She was confused, of course. She confused the tragedy you speak of and your mother's death with what is happening now: the other tragedies in the North. She prays that the survivors may be comforted in their mourning. She prays for God's word in Ireland."

I did not say anything. Sister Power continued.

"Even outside St. Fina's people have heard of her miracles."

"Her what?"

"At St. Fina's they believe she has cured a woman's cataract by touching her eyes, that she has rid another woman of nightmares. They say her prayers brought to St. Fina's a man who had been ashamed of his mother's lunacy. And now, so they would say, she has brought you here."

"But I was sent for."

"Your name and address were typed out on a card she had, but it was she who must have told someone what they were."

"But you can't possibly believe, Sister—"

"It is not for us to say what to believe or what not to believe."

The coffee cups were placed one inside the other, the saucers placed beneath them. I was offered another biscuit but did not accept one. Sister Power rose.

"If you study the lives of the saints," she said, "you will find that it is horror and tragedy that often make them what they are. Part of a pattern with Our Lord."

I followed her back to the room where the old woman was dying. I felt extraordinary, as if I were in a dream. Of course there was an ordinary explanation: the house of the Irishman in Sansepolcro had been pointed out to an Irish tourist, and the address remembered. I had somehow been identified as the son of a woman who had cut her wrists in a house in Cork. It was impossible to guess why Josephine had been told

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all that, but any explanation was bound to be more sensible than talk of the miraculous.

"Remember," Josephine said. "Remember the day you caught a dragonfly?"

"Josephine," I said, as softly as I could.

"Your father is kind. 'Bring out a drink to those men,' he said. He never forgets the needs of anyone."

"Yes, he is kind."

" 'I want a blackness,' your mother said. All the wallpaper they put up she didn't care about. The new house meant nothing to her."

Her eyes closed and opened at once again. "God bless you and make you pray," she said. She died just after she spoke, the rosary beads idle in her hands.

I spent that night in a hotel in Cork, the Arbutus Lodge in Montenotte. Early the next morning I went to look at the house I had lived in with Josephine and my mother. Architects practiced there now, and on an upper floor a dentist called B. K. Murphy. I walked away from it, down the hill to the docks; I bought the *Irish Times* and the *Cork Examiner* and read them without much interest in a café, resolving not to have a drink until midday.

I had to wait two days for the funeral. I took a bus to the village near Kilneagh and walked out to where the house had been. People in passing cars were curious about me, a well-dressed old man with a stick, moving slowly on a chilly day. The iron gates at the end of the avenue were rusted, chained together and secured with a padlock. Brambles grew through them, the roof of the gate lodge had fallen in. A crop of nettles was thickening on the avenue itself and it wouldn't have surprised me if the ruin of Kilneagh had somehow disappeared since last I'd visited it. But it hadn't: blackly it rose from among the weeds and the undergrowth, windowless and gaunt, a hideous place now.

I stood in the yard, on the spot where Josephine and I had once stood, returning together fifty years ago. It was here, she'd told me, that O'Neill and John Paddy had laid the bodies. She had recovered consciousness, and what she'd seen first were my dead sisters. Shouting to one another, O'Neill and John Paddy had again emerged from the house with my father's corpse carried between them. It might have been their shouting that brought the four men back to the yard, as if the men had been watching their handiwork from somewhere in the garden. O'Neill had called them murderers, and then there had been the shots that killed him and John Paddy. Josephine had prayed, she said, lying there as if dead; and then the men had gone away.

I went away myself, hating the place, as I had on the day Josephine had brought me back there. But I remembered her as she'd been that day, how she had so very much wanted to make the journey, how she'd surprised me by kneeling in the yard and giving thanks for her life and for my mother's and for mine. She had been silent on the walk back to the village and on the bus to Cork, and I knew she was continuing to give thanks.

That night in the Arbutus Lodge I fell asleep at the dinner table, having drunk too much.

At the funeral there were the women of St. Fina's, or those who could be trusted, who would not be upset. They stood awkwardly by the graveside, their heads bowed, tears flowing freely, sometimes noisily. They were a mixture of ages, young and old and middle-aged, shabbily dressed, none of them carrying handbags.

A stout, gray-haired priest murmured the burial words with a display of feeling, and I guessed he must have known Josephine and felt affection for her gentleness and her piety. Nuns from St. Fina's stood in a bunch, their lips moving in a whisper when they were required to. One of the women cried out when the coffin was lowered, and a nun moved to her side. Then earth and pebbles rattled on the varnished wood, and a few minutes later the crowd began to disperse. Two gravediggers appeared with shovels.

"Excuse me," the priest said, behind me somewhere. I turned and waited for him. "I know who you are," he said. "You've come from Italy."

"Yes."

"She's at peace now."

"Yes, she is."

He walked with me. The wind blew his surplice about. It was bitterly cold that day.

"You know they believe she is a saint," he said, "those women from St. Fina's? They believe that one day a Pope, whatever Pope in the future it happens to be—"

"Yes, I know."

"All the women at St. Fina's believe that. You saw only a handful today."

"Yes, I guessed that."

"It was good of you to come, sir."

I shook my head. I said:

"I've always wondered how she discovered my address."

"It was I who typed it out for her. She wanted that done when she knew she was going to die. She'd had a dream, she said, years ago. She dreamed she visited you in Italy. She remembered the address from that."

He nodded at me and went away, to join the St.

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Fina's nuns. He seemed a simple man, who might even himself believe that the lunatic women of St. Fina's had stumbled upon a truth, and that a dream was part of it. There was a taxi waiting for me, which took me to the hotel to collect my suitcase and then on to the airport.

I was glad, as always, to leave Ireland.

The journey home was only a little different. I flew direct to Paris and took the *Palatino* overnight to Florence, and then another train to Arezzo, and then the bus. I didn't sleep. All the time I thought of Josephine, not as I used to before her death, not seeing her in my mind as a maid in Kilneagh or the person who later looked after my mother: I thought of her as she had been in the dusky hospital room, beneath yet another crucifix, old and no longer beautiful, her face and her hands no longer a contradiction. I did not believe that she had ever experienced the dream the priest had spoken of, but that in the confusion of her madness she had herself forgotten how she had stumbled on my whereabouts. There were often tales of women cured of disease and nightmares, and of people made to travel. None of it was enough to suggest the miraculous.

At the Florence railway station a mass of azaleas bloomed in their huge terra-cotta pots, marvelous elaborations of brilliant flowers, reds and yellows and creams, elegantly grouped. Whenever I see the azaleas in Florence I am glad I live in Italy, but that morning I passed them by without bothering to pause. I waited in the buffet for my train, endeavoring to revive myself with coffee. Of the three survivors, had I myself been damaged most? I'm not entirely an alcoholic in my old age, but I'm an inhuman kind of person, desiccated, not easily moved, drawn away from other people. I have failed in relationships with women, finding solace for that in sensuality. I am left with a garden and a country that is not my own, making use of its art and its wine.

Such introspection accompanied me home to Sansepolcro, to an existence that the people of this town consider both lonely and eccentric. I opened the windows of the house to expel the stuffiness that had accumulated during my few days' absence, and later, while drinking Brolio on my terrace, I noticed on the marble-topped table the telegram that had summoned me, which I had placed beneath a stone I use for holding down papers in a breeze. I read it again, remembering the feeling of pleasure I'd had because Josephine had wanted me. The pleasure returned, warmer by far than the effect of the Brolio. I sat as the sun dwindled, indulging myself with it, delighting in it by the time the wine was finished. And when I opened the second bottle it seemed to me that what the women of St. Fina's had believed about Josephine should be honored, not despised. Like Sister Power and the gray-haired priest, I did not make a hasty judgment but took the facts and inebriatedly assembled them, and then did so again. I thought about the saints. It was said by some that St. Bridget had miraculously journeyed from Ireland to Italy. St. Frediano, patron of Lucca, was Irish also. St. Columbanus converted the people of Bobbio. A finger of St. Patrick is preserved in Rome. The stories of the saints had been immortalized by the painters of the Renaissance, from which for so long I had drawn life of a kind, by Piero della Francesca and Ghirlandaio and Giotto and Fra Angelico, and by hundreds of others.

St. Crispin was a shoemaker. St. Paul made tents. On her twelfth birthday St. Catherine cut off her hair so that no one would want to marry her. A spring gushed in the desert when St. Euthymius prayed. In a dream St. Cosma and St. Damian took the leg of a dead Negro and attached it to the stump of a living nobleman. St. Anthony preached to the fish of the sea. St. Clare saved the city of Assisi. The dead body of St. Zenobius gave life to a withered tree.

Before the wine was finished, before I dropped into sleep on my terrace, as I often do in the evenings, I saw with perfect certitude the story of a woman who took her place with all of them. Scene after scene spread themselves before me, by Ghirlandaio and Giotto and Fra Angelico: Josephine saved from fire, her prayers saving two others; Josephine's years of goodness in consoling an unhappy woman; Josephine achieving a state of mysticism that people called lunacy, performing small miracles among her fellow patients. But most of all there seemed to be the dream she'd had, in the brilliant colors of Lorenzo di Credi: how she had dreamed of visiting the other survivor of the tragedy and had for many years afterward sent her companion in survival messages to celebrate the birth of Christ. And then, at the time of her death, there was the miracle that crowned them all: how she had moved that embittered man to find pleasure in the wisp that remained of a human relationship. On her deathbed she prayed that Ireland's murders might be forgiven, that all the survivors be granted consolation, and rescued from the damage wrought by horror. Josephine of the Survivors they called her, Ghirlandaio and all the others.

Before I fell asleep, I wept on my terrace, the first time since my mother's death. It was ridiculous to weep, so old and wrinkled like a crab, half drunk and even senile. And yet it wasn't in the least ridiculous: it was as right and fitting as the sainthood imparted by the inmates of St. Fina's. For a moment she stood in glory on my terrace and then she disappeared. □

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THE NEW SNOBBERY

How to Show Off in America

by John Brooks

A young professor of neurobiology—black, neatly bearded, wearing an open collar and a gold chain—appears, surrounded by electronic equipment of indeterminate function, in a whiskey advertisement printed in a quality magazine. His home, we are told, is Cambridge, Massachusetts; his age is thirty-two; his hobbies are jungle exploration, film-making, and archery; his latest accomplishment: "While continuing neurobiological research in the South American jungle, he discovered a little known Bush Afro-American tribe . . ."; and his Scotch: Dewar's White Label, which is, of course, the product being advertised. But to whom, exactly, is the fact that such a person prefers Dewar's White Label expected to commend that brand? Neurobiologists? Blacks? Bearded men, or women who admire them? Wearers of gold chains? Residents of Cambridge? Jungle explorers, film-makers, archers, thirty-two-year-olds?

Again: In 1978, at a peak of airline rate-cutting, American Airlines advertised the advantages of a full-fare flight over a much cheaper "super-saver" flight: not that the seats were wider, not that the plane was faster or the service better, not that the food or drink was better or more plentiful, but simply that "your neighbors on the flight will be full-fare customers."

Yet again: At about the same time, watch manufacturers were competing to produce the world's thinnest watch, the apparent winner being Concord Watch Company, a Swiss concern, with its Delirium I:

thickness, one-sixteenth of an inch, or about the same as that of a dime; price (much of it presumably for the thinness), $4400.

Around New York and other large cities, people were lining up at the doorways of discotheques to test their social rank by finding out whether or not they would be admitted to watch transvestites, drug-abusers, homosexuals, sadomasochists, and normal people

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dance and cavort. The sole arbiter of each petitioner's social fate was the doorman, of no discernible social status himself except that which flowed from his position, who made his decisions on the basis of whim, personal acquaintance, or dress—the preferred form (apart from transvestism) generally being either blue jeans or traditional formal wear, and the least desirable being conventional business clothes.

What, we may well ask, accounted and accounts for such behavior?

The answer, surely, lies in the set of phenomena and motivations first systematically described and analyzed in 1899 by Thorstein Veblen in his book *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. Probably millions of Americans who never heard of Professor Veblen are familiar with the notions of "conspicuous consumption" and "conspicuous waste." Veblen's observation has found its way into the national psyche: that snobbery and social pretense play not a peripheral but a central, even dominant, role in shaping the order of a democratic society.

There can be no doubt that Veblen found, in turn-of-the-century America, staggering evidence of the quest for reputability through display. Fifth Avenue in New York City, the nation's leisure-class showcase, had over the previous two decades become a row of fantastic palaces almost palpably snubbing each other. Their displays of wealth and splendor—lightly disguised as family residences—perfectly fulfilled the Veblenian requirement that they be easily translated into cash figures by the people they were intended to impress and humiliate.

For example, the steel tycoon Henry Clay Frick, looking for the first time at the new Vanderbilt mansion on the block between 51st and 52nd streets, had a pecuniary rather than an aesthetic reaction. He instantly calculated that the upkeep would cost $300,000 a year. "That would be 6 percent on five millions . . . say a thousand dollars a day," he mused, not bothering to admire the architecture. The Vanderbilt mansion, then, had precisely accomplished its purpose: rather than being considered a work of art or a pleasant place to live in or visit, it was, to Frick, a publicly displayed bank account of enviable proportions.

So it was with private railway cars and yachts. The principal feature of William H. Vanderbilt's car, the Vanderbilt, was—as the proud owner was careful to let the world know—that it had cost more than the car of the rival railroad man Leland Stanford. J. Pierpont Morgan's third yacht, launched in 1898 while Veblen was scribbling away in Chicago, was 302 feet long—longer, of course, than anyone else's yacht; but even more to Veblen's point was Morgan's comment that anyone who needed to ask the cost of a yacht couldn't afford it, a remark that has perhaps never been surpassed as a succinct statement of what Veblen labeled "predatory invidiousness."

As to the parties of the rich, there were tales repeated in newspapers of dinners on horseback, of banquets for pet dogs, of hundred-dollar bills folded into guests' dinner napkins, of a hostess who attracted attention by seating a chimpanzee at her table, of centerpieces in which lightly clad maidens swam in glass tanks or emerged from huge pies, of parties at which cigars were ceremoniously lighted with flaming banknotes of large denominations. What came to be accepted as the paradigmatic party of the Gilded Age was the fancy-dress ball given in New York in February 1897 by Mr. and Mrs. Bradley Martin. For it, at a cost that the host and hostess were glad to estimate publicly as $370,000, the interior of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel was converted for an evening into a plausible replica of Versailles. August Belmont came in a suit of gold-inlaid armor valued at $10,000. The host, in a particularly nice piece of invidiousness, came as Louis XV, the king celebrated for having said, *"Après moi, le déluge."*

And so on. What must have struck Veblen as he read about such doings—so distant from his farm childhood, and even from his sheltered academic lair at the Rockefeller-supported University of Chicago—was the absence of shame, of tasteful understatement, of noblesse oblige. Those traits seemed to have been forced offstage entirely in a total triumph of predatory invidiousness.

John Kenneth Galbraith remarked in an essay on Veblen that his was "a time when gentlemen still believed they were gentlemen, and . . . that it was wealth that made a difference. And, by and large, the rest of the population still agreed." That is, others took the leisure class at its own assessment, and both admired and envied its proofs of its status, however bizarre.

True enough, there had been among the American yeomanry a certain surly disdain of the pretensions of the rich and the well-bred long before Veblen—certainly since the opening of the West. It found its most eloquent expression in the works of Mark Twain. However, this disdain was directed mainly not at the rich but at the well-bred. Veblen's unrestrained ridicule of the robber barons' vulgar mansions and bejeweled wives was shocking because it was a social indiscretion, a guffaw in the middle of a church service. *The Theory of the Leisure Class* for the first time gave Americans general license to laugh at their economic superiors.

They have been doing so in increasing numbers and with increasing volume ever since. Today, lower-class

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John Brooks is on the staff of *The New Yorker*. This excerpt is taken from his new book, *Showing Off in America*, to be published in the summer.

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irony about competitive display of the rich is more or less taken for granted. The new millionaire who collects Andy Warhols and raises or buys a monstrous pile on the Long Island dunes—complete with a swimming pool within a few hundred feet of the eminently swimmable Atlantic Ocean—*expects* to be mocked by the local yeomanry, and, in an economic expression of that mockery, to be outrageously overcharged by them for such services as plumbing, carpentry, and lawn-mowing. He does not care. It is those closer to him on the socioeconomic scale, the rival but lesser millionaires down the dune or across the lane, whom he seeks to impress. Competitive display no longer crosses class lines, or it crosses them much less readily than before.

Veblen defined his "leisure class" as those who enjoyed "industrial exemption"—freedom from what we now call blue-collar work. In his time, such people were comparatively few. Now they are a national majority. Leisure no longer belongs only to the "leisure class." The leading industrialist of today, the lineal descendant of Veblen's leisure-class member, may work at his job ten or twelve hours a day and have almost no leisure time at all, although he maintains lavish facilities for the family's enjoyment and for display. Meanwhile, the laborer who belongs to a strong union may have short hours, long vacations, and ample time for leisure, although his display takes the modest form of fancy lawn-mowing equipment, fancy automobiles, and perhaps a motorboat. Literally speaking, he has become the nearest thing to an American leisure class.

In the new American social structure, there seems to be an almost infinite number of "classes," constantly merging and disintegrating and reforming. Membership in these classes—perhaps more accurately called cliques—is based partly on money, but to a far greater extent than in Veblen's time it is based on other factors, such as education combined with predilection. Examples of such "classes" might be middle-level suburban corporate executives, factory workers, hippies, and environmentalists. Russell Lynes in *Snobs*, an astute little book published in 1950, distinguished eight new kinds of snob that he believed had superseded the old social snob: intellectual; regional (Virginia in the South, Boston in the Northeast, San Francisco in the West); moral (either religious or antireligious); sensual ("being able to wrest more pleasure from the flesh than anyone else"); emotional ("I feel more deeply than anyone else"); occupational; political; and finally, "reverse" (one who tries too hard not to be a snob).

Each of Lynes's categories of snob was, of course, engaged in the characteristic act of snobbery, competitive display; but in each case it was a form of display that, unlike the kind Veblen described, did not require the possession or expenditure of huge sums of money. By the 1950s, display had become a game almost anyone could play. The leisure class, as defined by Veblen, had become nobody and everybody. "Status-seeking" became a national preoccupation, as certified by the instant huge success of Vance Packard's *The Status Seekers* when it was published in 1959. Millions of Americans came to feel that "trading up" from last year's Ford to this year's Mercury or Oldsmobile, or from last year's three-hole Buick to this year's four-holer, was essential to their personal and social well-being.

And then came a strange development. With the arrival of a recession at the end of the 1950s, not only manufacturers of automobiles and other goods but leaders of national government, too, came to believe that predatory invidiousness was essential to the national welfare. A "buy now" campaign, led by President Eisenhower, urged all Americans to buy new cars and other expensive objects immediately, whether they needed them or not (and, implicitly, whether the objects were any good or not), in order to bring about economic recovery. Competitive display became patriotic.

This went too far. From the end of the sixties on, unprecedented inflation made indiscriminate consumer spending appear as at best a mixed blessing for the national economic welfare. The oil shortages that began with the OPEC embargo in 1973 made cars with twenty-gallon gas tanks seem downright subversive. Straightforward Veblenian display did not disappear, but it became muted, partly as a result of these economic pressures. A more complex display system began to take shape.

More recently, the disco doorman as social arbiter has suggested that, in bizarrely changed form, the same social anxiety that drove the robber barons to conspicuous display still exists. But we note, if we look closely at modern manners, the introduction, however faint, of irony. Indeed, the ascendance of irony—fostered by increased education, progressive disillusion with social shibboleths, promotion by the entertainment-mad media, and even, perhaps, the decline of the United States in the esteem of the rest of the world—is what distinguishes the signs Americans now devise to declare their superiority to one another.

The essence of parody display, the new and rising form of American competitive boasting, is ambivalence. Parody pays tribute to the state of being rich and powerful, but at the same time it is careful to make clear that it is partly kidding. The display of one's wit and irony is as much the point of the exercise as the display of one's investment portfolio and well-connected friends. "Never too earnest" is now the rule of American style, and so it is the organizing principle of the short manual that follows.

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Modesty

Harun Al-Rashid, caliph of Baghdad, was not the first or the last aristocratic hero to explore his city disguised as a commoner. Such imposture came to be a literary cliché, and was satirized by W. S. Gilbert in *The Mikado*. But the purpose of these acts of declassing was to provide amusement for the disguised aristocrat; he stood ready at any time, if danger or convenience required, to throw off the disguise and assert his rightful class power. When declassing occurs in the United States, it is undertaken not to toy with the commoners but rather to become indistinguishable from them—most characteristically, in order to gain popularity or to avoid ridicule. For Americans, getting down with the Joneses is a serious matter.

Some fine examples are provided by the third generation of the Rockefeller family. Early newsreels of Nelson show him speaking with what is generally known as a church-school accent (although in fact he did not go to a church school). Much later, in his time of political eminence, he still had an apparently intractable air of arrogant patronage, but so declassed was his accent that he managed to make it seem the arrogance of a particularly successful undertaker or taxi-fleet owner. The word "party," for example, had been transformed from "pahty" to "purrty."

Again, there came a time when Nelson Rockefeller's brother Laurence decided to invite his former classmates at the Lincoln School in New York City to Pocantico Hills, the family fiefdom in Westchester County, for a reunion luncheon. It was first proposed that, in order to avoid the least semblance of pretension or display, only hamburgers would be served, unaccompanied by alcoholic drinks, not even beer. Fortunately for the spirit of the occasion, reason prevailed and drinks were served, along with a respectable if not sumptuous lunch. But the declassing impulse had been there, and it had nearly won. (It might be rude to suggest that an impulse to thrift had been there too.)

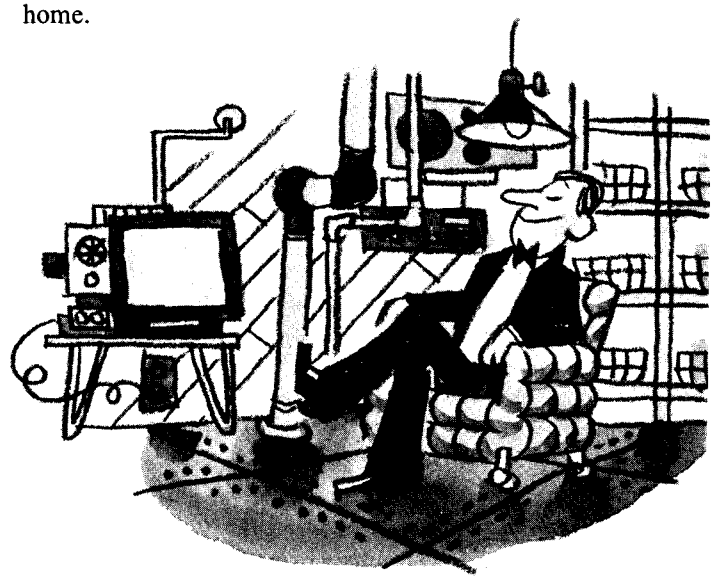
Americans now try to declass themselves quite often. Russell Baker maintains that "being no brighter than anyone else is a social asset among Americans." It is, Baker points out, entirely acceptable to boast about one's incompetence in science, mathematics, poetry, or foreign languages. On the other hand, "to accuse an American of being unfit to drive an automobile is to invite a punch in the nose"; "no American can bring himself to admit, even to himself, that he has no sense of humor"; and "most Americans who lead monogamous sex lives would no sooner confess to it than they would admit to inadequate driving skill."

It is no accident that the forms of accomplishment to be scorned or hidden—higher learning and language skill—are among those traditionally associated with the upper class, while those to be belligerently claimed —mechanical skill, joke-making ability, and promiscuous sexual prowess—are those associated with the working class. The huge and unprecedented phenomenon of blue jeans, which spread from the United States to the rest of the world in the 1970s, was in its early phases largely a phenomenon of declassing. The person who for years has lived and worked in a high-status place (as conventionally regarded) such as Boston, New York, or San Francisco, but who grew up in a lower-status place such as Peoria, Illinois, or Des Moines, Iowa, will routinely announce himself or herself to strangers as being "from Peoria" or "from Des Moines."

Attempts at declassing to gain social acceptance are no less conspicuous display than similar attempts to raise one's class position. They are conspicuous display in the new mode, the flip side up.

Decor

In the late 1970s, in certain urban centers noted for their sophistication, a new home-furnishing style made an appearance. Called "High-Tech," it celebrates the use of industrial and institutional equipment in the home.



In a High-Tech apartment, all the pipes and support posts are exposed, but fine old hardwood or wide-board pine floors are scrupulously covered with, let's say, the plate used on the decks of destroyers. "Furniture is upholstered with movers' pads, closets are appointed with dry-cleaners' rotating racks, the refrigerator is a hospital blood bank's, bookcases are commercial steel shelving . . . lighting is from factory lamps, and the dining-room table is a restaurant booth," *The New Yorker* has explained. The place ends up looking like a

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nightmarish collage of factory, attack vessel, emergency room, moving van, cheap restaurant, and third-rate resort hotel.

High-Tech is high-grade parody display. After generations during which the direction of design influence ran from the industrial toward the domestic, an about-face is the most dramatic way possible of attracting attention, at whatever cost in domestic comfort and grace. Moreover, it is clear that the parody is conscious. Those who furnish their places in High-Tech style are well aware of, and exultant about, doing something witty and ironic. They flaunt commercial and industrial objects to prove that they don't have to be serious about such matters.

Art

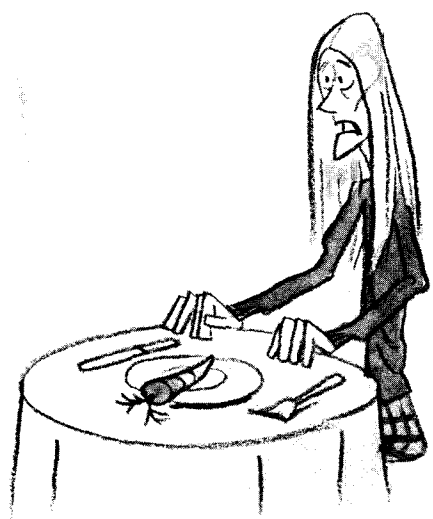
In the 1950s, when the Abstract Expressionist (also called Action Painting) movement was first coming to fame, the spatters and smears of paint that were characteristic of that movement tended to look to the uninitiated like designs for home decoration. For example, some of the canvases of Jackson Pollock, the most famous and later the highest-priced artist of the school, were frequently compared to the designs on commercially sold linoleum. But the priests and acolytes of Pollock's art knew better, and reserved their greatest scorn for those who missed the point. Concomitantly, the word "decorative" came to be the worst anathema a critic or collector could lay on the work of an Abstract Expressionist artist.

By the late 1970s, numerous annual model changes later, the prevailing attitude had been reversed. Now Abstract Expressionist works have joined the fossil objects of Old Masters and Post-Impressionists in museums, and "decorative" is warm praise for the work of young artists.

Now as in the 1950s, art-scene people who use the word "decorative" are showing off their knowledge and ability to discriminate and appreciate. Yet the present meaning of the word is a parody of the older one. The new people of the art world pride themselves on their sophistication and self-awareness as well as their sensitivity to the latest trends and styles and ideas. They know, for example, that straightforward, irony-free display has come in their circles to be considered "square"—another favorite anathema of theirs—and therefore counterproductive of status. Thus, to make display palatable to the new taste, they leaven it with irony. Their use of "decorative" with a value precisely opposite to the one they used to give it is display, all right; but somewhere in the back of their minds they know, and appreciate, that a word employed to mean the opposite of what it recently meant is as silly as a conversation in Lewis Carroll.

Nutrition

The American cult of thinness in the postwar years coincided precisely with a great rise in national affluence. The availability of enough food and drink to make almost anyone fat deprived the state of fatness of its role as a bodily certificate of overall superiority. The manufacturers of Virginia Slims cigarettes advertised what the new certificate would be, at least for women: "A Woman Should Be Both Thin and Rich."



In the most sophisticated American cities, it is the most sophisticated—and expensive—restaurants that serve the smallest portions. Luncheon at La Grenouille or "21," or dinner at Le Plaisir in New York, is a case in point. Part of the premium price charged at such places evidently goes for the privilege of not having to face a full plate. Absent evidence to the contrary, the patron is assumed to be on a diet. Similarly, some of the most dedicated and stylish hostesses, giving little dinner parties at home, make a great show of the work of preparation, inviting guests into the kitchen to watch the seemingly endless process, all the while regaling them with the names of rare herbs and condiments—and then set on the table a feast quantitatively fit for a bird.

Surely the ultimate manifestation of display by starvation is the sudden prevalence in recent years of the disease called anorexia nervosa. Anorexia occurs more commonly now than at any previous time in recorded medical history; it is particularly prevalent among adolescent girls of affluent families in the United States; and it is a grave, frequently fatal affliction.

The principal symptom of anorexia is a refusal to eat, either at all or except in periodic binges followed by vomiting. Nobody knows why the vast majority of anorexics are women, but perhaps it has to do with society's preference for women as primary objects of display. One might speculate that woman, who in Veblen's scheme was the totem of family affluence with her rolls of flesh and her expensive furbelows of clothing, has in the modern anorexic's case become the victim of an opposite cultural aspiration. Conspicuous consumption has been carried to the ultimate, self-destructive extreme of consuming the consumer's own body, the very self. Anorexia may be looked upon as a parody display carried to the point of madness.

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Physical fitness

Perhaps nothing exemplifies parody display better than what was called first "jogging" and later "running." The language change is itself a trap for the unfashionable.

Theoretically, running is the perfect anti-Veblenian form of exercise: that is, it looks down on invidious competition and all the "clannishness, massiveness, and ferocity" usually associated with such competition; it does not even have many of the elements of craft and exploit. However, as Veblen noted, noncompetitive sports (riding to hounds and walking with a stick were the ones he cited) tend in the long run to become invidious. In the case of running, this invidiousness is expressed in the attitudes of runners and the language they favor. Patti Hagan, a runner with a sense of irony, has called the language typical of runners "psycho-babble recycled as runner-babble." Miss Hagan quotes Valerie Andrews, author of *The Psychic Power of Running*: "While we activate the archetypes of primal running man and the information code for genetic and evolutionary past as we run, at the same time we reach a transcendental state that may enable us to connect with other forms of consciousness flowing through the universe at large."

Miss Hagan does not herself go in for transcendental language about running, but this is not to say that her attitude toward running is calm and rational. It is comparable to that of, say, the Crusaders toward the Holy Grail. Here are Miss Hagan and Joe Cody, in *The Road Runner's Guide to New York City*, on the "hazards" of running in Riverside Park:

> Unleashed muggers and rapists at all times of day and night; *always* risky for lone women runners (Riverside Drive route as well), group running recommended; some air pollution from Riverside Drive traffic and Henry Hudson Parkway; dogs off leash; harsh winter winds off the Hudson; kids on bicycles and Big Wheels; in the summer, poison ivy lines narrow river path below 125th; occasional rats along river; isolated areas of woods and tall bushes along northern segment of Riverside Drive and river path.

Violent theft, rape, murder, dog bite, poison ivy, rats, overhanging branches: some might judge the hazards unacceptable. Not Hagan and Cody; Riverside Park is second, after Central Park, on their list of recommended running tracks in Manhattan.

Are they kidding? Yes and no, a non-runner must conclude. Exhaustion, hypoglycemia, and oxygen deprivation may produce states of mind that give rise to a delicious madness, but it seems evident that the comic effect is to some extent sought—that the writers about running, like the much more numerous talkers about running, are largely engaged in parody display.

Getting high

In the 1960s, marijuana smoking in colleges and universities became what beer drinking had been earlier, and the use of more dangerous drugs what hard-liquor drinking had been. Drug use, that is, became a parody of the old form of display.

Middle-class drug use from the beginning had an element of pecuniary display, because drugs, being illegal, cost much more than alcohol. However, in the sixties the price was subsidiary to other elements, particularly the implications of authority-defying and risk-taking. Now, possession of small amounts of marijuana in many states is regarded by the law as a peccadillo, of the general magnitude of a traffic violation.

Even Letitia Baldridge, the Establishment arbiter of etiquette, in 1978 pronounced use of marijuana and hashish to be "marginally socially acceptable." Meanwhile, the street cost of all illegal drugs is sky-high. Cocaine in particular is so expensive as to be available

almost exclusively to the affluent, and thus it is an ideal vehicle for pure Veblenian display. Its invidiousness was certified early in 1979, when a number of members of the Chicago Board Options Exchange were shown to have been conducting floor trades in cocaine as well as in options on the stock of IBM, General Motors, and Exxon.

Graffiti

The "writing" that for more than a decade has covered the inside and outside walls of many subway cars in New York City signifies different things to different groups. To the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the run of subway riders, it is offensive and potentially threatening vandalism; to liberals among the riders, it is a harmless safety valve for ghetto anger; to a

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few radical-chic highbrow critics, it is naive art; and to the artists (or, as they prefer to be called, writers) it is competitive display, intended to impress colleagues rather than outrage clerk-typists, salve liberal consciences, or please critics. A group that signs itself "Top Stars, Inc." is indulging in the only form of media hype available to it, and, incidentally, parodying the billboard ads that the writing surrounds in an abandoned embrace. (It is interesting to note that, under one of the rigid rules that subway writers impose on themselves, the ads themselves are almost never defaced, as if advertising were the one aspect of middle-class society that the writers can respect.)

Real estate

In 1970, according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, half of the families in the United States could afford a medium-priced new house; in 1980, 13 percent could. Where is competitive house display now, when seven out of eight cannot buy a house at all?

Some invidiousness is to be had through purchase of the new substitute for a house, the condominium, or "condo"—a word to conjure with in singles bars. But competitive house display is now mostly reserved to the rich, or the imaginary rich. Particularly in southern California, residential real estate has become a play-money game.

Richard Reeves in 1979 described the Los Angeles real-estate bubble, which began in a big way in 1975 and reached its peak four years later. Prices entirely took leave of reality, and the sole or principal purpose of buying became not to use the property bought but to resell it later—not much later—at a higher price.

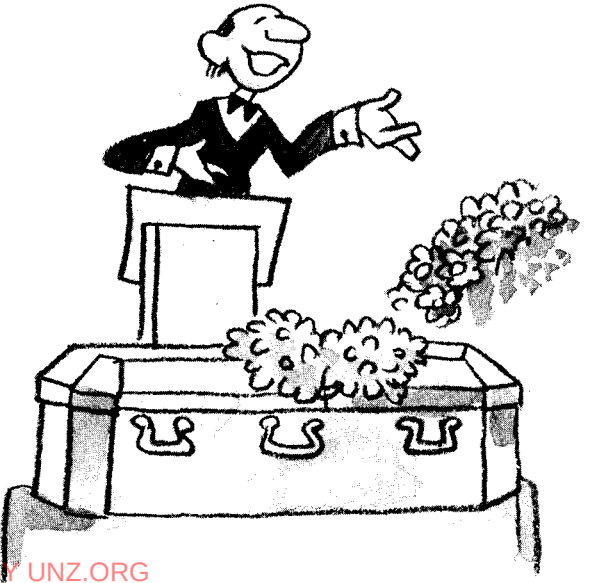
Agents said that nearly half the big-ticket sales were to foreigners—a code word for rich Arabs, who had selected southern California as a secular Mecca. Housewives reported agents coming to their doors and saying, with a straight face, "Madam, inside that car is a genuine Arab who has authorized me to offer you cash for your house." But Arabs couldn't buy all the houses, and they didn't even bother with the formerly low-priced items, the Levittown-style bungalows that a few years earlier had cost $20,000 and now cost $80,000 or $100,000. As a result of the boom, Californians of modest means who wanted to own their own places were nailing themselves to financial crucifixes to do so. Families with incomes of under $20,000 a year were buying houses costing more than five times that much, and they managed it by taking huge mortgage loans at sharply rising interest rates. In 1979, the average down payment was 20 percent of the sale price, with the rest covered by an array of mortgages. Since a family earning $20,000 almost never had $20,000 in cash ready to put down, even the down payment was often borrowed in whole or in part. The resulting interest payments amounted to most of the family income.

Particularly in the case of middle-range transactions—say, from $100,000 up to a million—sometimes the seller himself was willing to grant the buyer a purchase-money mortgage covering nearly all of the sale price. Occasionally, in a deal called, in the trade's charming jargon, a "wrap," the seller was willing to grant the buyer a purchase-money mortgage covering *all* of the sale price. In such cases, the buyer paid no money at first and the seller received none. The house being "conveyed," as the bill of sale said, for $800,000 might be a nasty, leaky little box of plasterboard and asphalt tile, standing on adobe earth subject to swelling, sinking, and, if it happened to be near the San Andreas fault, sudden engorgement by the earth. It was all very appropriate. The transaction by which this residential disaster area changed hands involved no money. The structure and the conveyance were a match—both cheerfully transparent lies. California had brought the Monopoly board to real life.

The irony of this enterprise was noted by California Senator Alan Cranston when he airily observed, "Inflation is not all bad. After all, it has allowed every American to live in a more expensive neighborhood without moving." In truth, the owner of a $20,000 house that suddenly becomes a $150,000 house has improved his conspicuous-display standing without his wish or act. But an event such as the southern California boom is not a joke. It is a social tragedy that will end in many ruined lives.

Bereavement

Once death was honored in America by direct display of the purest Veblenian kind. A flourishing industry catered to mourners with silk armbands, samplers



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depicting burial places, expensive posthumous portraits, and even specially designed mourning jewelry. Now mourning hardly exists in any formal sense and death itself is treated with degrees of irony proportionate to the fashion aspirations of the survivors. A funeral at which there are no jokes or putdowns at the expense of the departed one is thought to lack style. As Martha K. Pike, museum curator at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, shrewdly points out, in the nineteenth century, sex was a taboo topic for serious conversation and death a favored one, while now the exact reverse is the case.

Success

In his book *Power!* Michael Korda gives the following pieces of advice:

–When it is necessary to face down an office opponent, "it is possible to prevent involuntary twitching at the corners of the mouth by applying Xylocaine anesthetic ointment before an important meeting." It is important, however, not to overdo the treatment: "If too much ointment is used, the lips become numb and speech is slurred."

–"Executives who sweat heavily may find it worthwhile to invest in a powerful air conditioner," since perspiration is "usually considered a sign of tension or lying."

–"An office calculator on the desk is a sign of weakness and overattention to detail. . . . The only IBM product that serves as a power symbol is the IBM Selectric II typewriter."

–"All the leather and chrome in the world will not replace a truly well-thought-out power scheme."

The reader so professionally secure as to feel no need for such office tactics—that is, the one able to afford the luxury of a sophisticated attitude—will take this as cynical wit. On the other hand, the dedicated office striver who needs all the help he can get, and knows it, will probably go out to the drugstore and ask for a jar of Xylocaine. What is parody to one reader is serious advice to another. Moreover, the general thrust of Korda's whole book, as well as the way it was promoted, strongly suggests that at bottom the author is serious: he really does mean that the reader should adopt these strategies in order to succeed in business.

Korda's irony is a sort of apology. The question of whether or not he is kidding in prescribing Xylocaine before important meetings describes the knife-edge on which the matter rests. All-out invidiousness is encouraged in office competition—but encouraged nervously. A still, small voice tells the encourager that he may be going too far.

Salaried office workers without expectation or hope of major promotions have meanwhile developed a new form of Schweikian passive resistance. Relying largely on their unions to protect their jobs, they just don't show up. Mountains of statistics support the conclusion that "volunteer absenteeism" in offices is running at record levels. In fact, this phenomenon is accused of playing a major role in the recent steep decline in American per-capita productivity. In almost any office building can be overheard conversations that reveal the subtleties of thought devoted—surely for the most part on company time—to the matter of excuses that will wash. Illness, of course, leads the list but lacks originality ("I feel a cold coming on"). Status with peers is more efficiently gained with less obvious entries: "I was sold a defective hair dryer and have to go to small-claims court," "The meter reader is coming and I have to let him in," and so on.

Telephoning

A refinement of telephone technology is the beeper, which is capable of summoning the user at any time to the nearest telephone to receive a call. So long as the beeper remained a novelty and did not become a vulgar nuisance, it had a unique ability to enhance the user's esteem, at least in the eyes of some, by beeping during social occasions such as dinner parties, thus calling attention in the most conspicuous possible way to the user's importance. In recent years, though, the beeper has fallen from grace. It is now commonly in the hands of low-status persons such as messengers and couriers, and has lost its status-enhancing power through democratization. Thus the iron law of telephone invidiousness has reasserted itself: to be socially effective, a telephone appliance must make the user harder to reach, not easier.

A way of life

Some merely dabble in life parody; others are more radical, becoming, in effect, parodists for a living. It is a new profession, only recently made possible by a cultural climate so receptive to parody that the mountebank aspect of a person's character is no longer a liability to be concealed, but has become an asset to be flaunted.

Perhaps the model of life parody in current United States culture is the writer and lecturer George Ames Plimpton. Plimpton has achieved celebrity as a parodist of the accomplished in many fields—taking a turn, by advance arrangement, as a pitcher for the New York Yankees, a quarterback for the Detroit Lions, a competitor against champions at golf, a boxer against Archie Moore, an instrumentalist in the New York Philharmonic, and so on. Some of the books he has written about these exploits have been commercially

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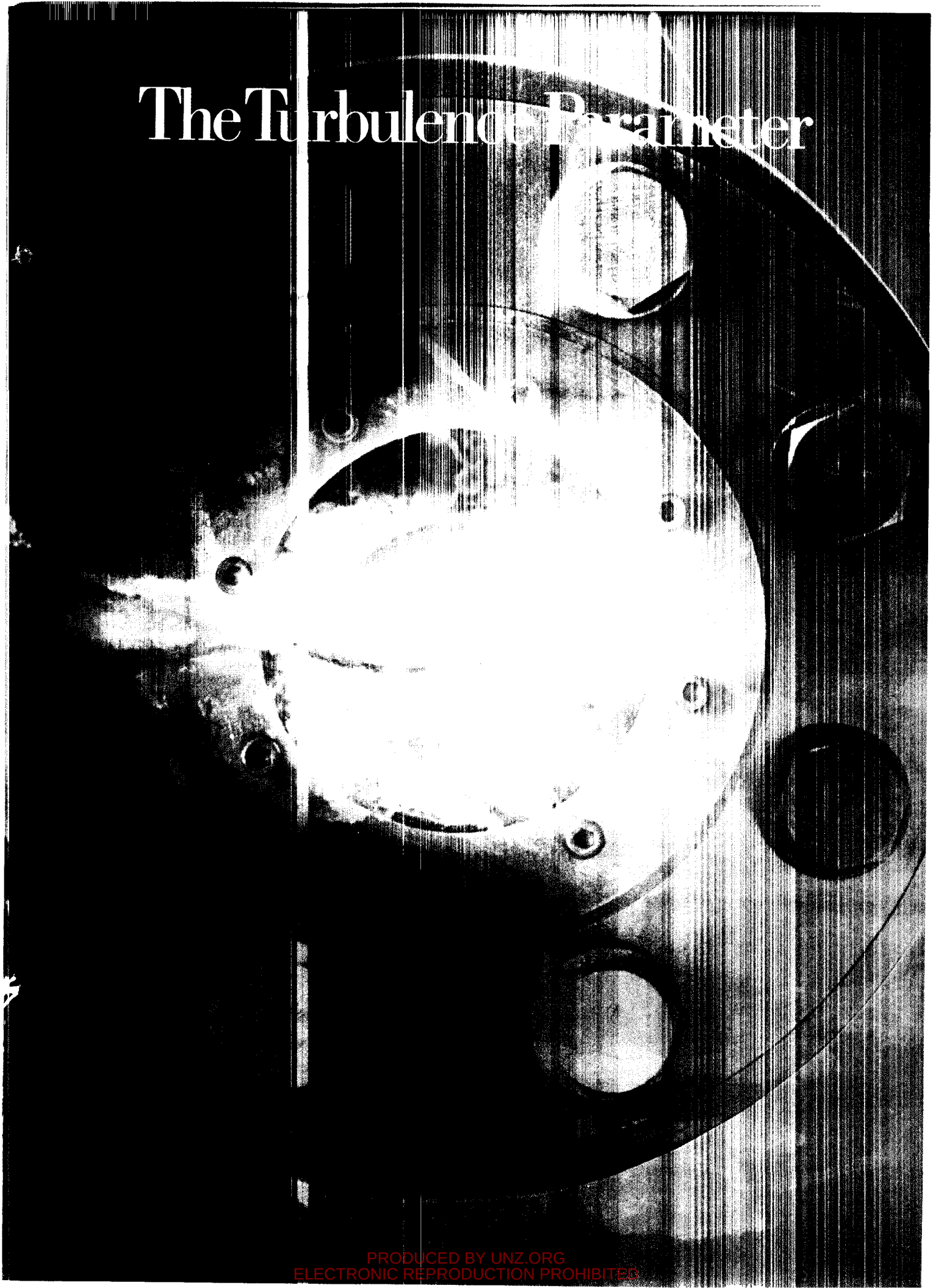
The Turbulent Parameter



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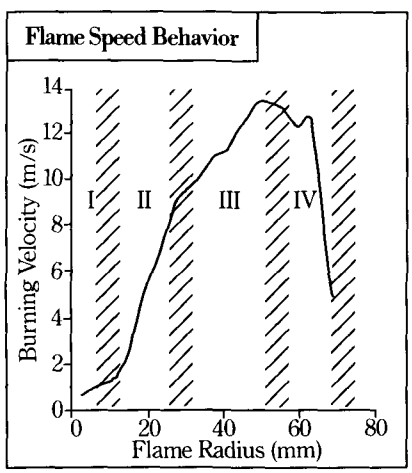
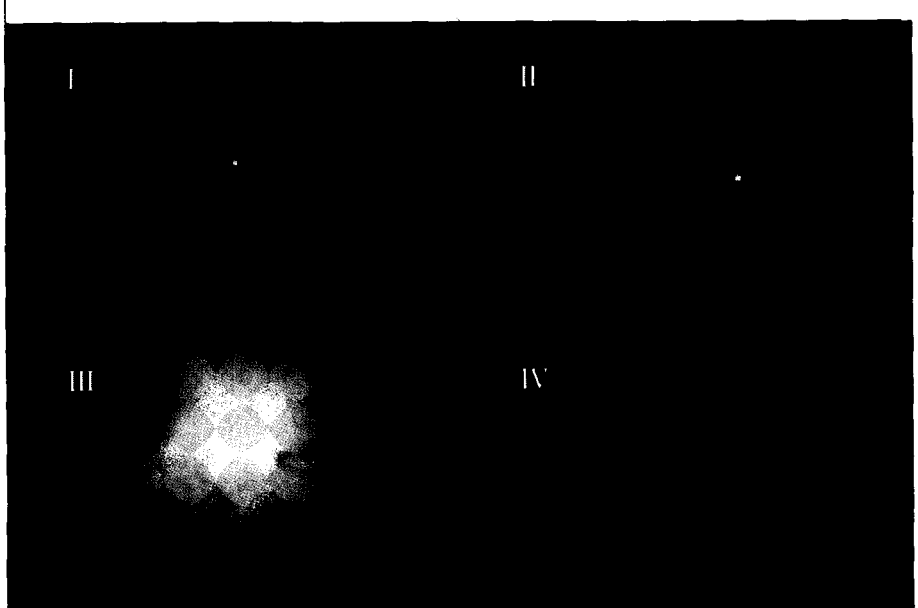
The Turbulence Parameter

Energy-efficient operation of the internal combustion engine requires the highly turbulent movement of fuel and air in the chamber. Recent advances at the General Motors Research Laboratories provide a new basis for determining what degree of turbulence will get the most work from each drop of fuel.



Burning velocity plotted as a function of flame radius. Combustion stages are indicated by roman numerals.



High-speed photographs showing flame evolution (lasting six milliseconds) through four stages: initiation (I); flame growth (II); full development (III); termination (IV).

WITHOUT TURBULENCE, the highly agitated motion of cylinder gases, combustion would take place too slowly for the gasoline engine to function. Predicting combustion behavior in order to design engines with greater fuel efficiency depends upon understanding the relationship between vital, turbulent gas motions and burning rate. The challenge is to quantify this relationship—a complex task made more difficult by the requirements of measuring a transient event occurring in a few milliseconds within a small, confined space.

New knowledge of how turbulence affects flame speed has been revealed in fundamental studies conducted at the General Motors Research Laboratories by Drs. Frederic Matekunas and Edward Groff. Their investigative results have been incorporated into a model that successfully predicts the effect of engine design and operating conditions on power and fuel economy.

The researchers separated their experiments into two phases. In the first phase, they measured turbulence in the engine cylinder; in the second phase, they determined flame speeds over a broad range of operating conditions. Testing took place in a specially designed, single-cylinder engine equipped with a transparent piston to permit high-speed filming of the combustion event.

Hot-wire anemometry was applied to measure the turbulent flows while the engine was operated without combustion. Instantaneous velocities were calculated from the anemometer signals and simultaneous measurements of gas temperature and pressure. More than 400,000 pieces of data were processed for each ten-second measurement period.

The significant measure of turbulence is its "intensity," defined as the fluctuating component of velocity. Because conditions in the cylinder are both transient within cycles and variant between cycles, separating the fluctuating and mean components of velocity is inherently difficult. The researchers overcame this problem by using a probe with two orthogonal wires properly aligned with the direction of the mean flow.

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In the combustion phase, tests were performed at over one hundred operating conditions of varied spark timing, spark plug location, engine speed and intake valve geometry. Detailed thermodynamic analyses were applied to the recorded cylinder pressures to calculate flame speeds throughout combustion. High-speed films were analyzed frame by frame to validate flame speeds and to characterize how gas motions influence the initial flame.

The researchers used these measured flame speeds, turbulence intensities, and the conditions under which they occurred to formulate a burning law for engine flames. They divided the combustion event into four stages. The initiation stage begins with ignition and ends as the flame grows to consume one percent of the fuel mass. In the second stage, the flame accelerates and thickens in response to the turbulent field. The third stage exhibits peak flame speed. In the final stage, the thick flame interacts increasingly with the chamber walls and decelerates.

OVER THE RANGE of turbulent intensities encountered in engines, the researchers were able to describe the turbulent burning velocity, S_T, during the critical third stage of combustion with the expression:

$$S_T = 2.0\, S_L + 1.2\, u'\, P_R^{0.82}\, \beta$$

S_L, the laminar flame speed—a known function of pressure, temperature and mixture composition—is the flame speed that would exist without turbulence. The variable u′ is the turbulence intensity. P_R represents a pressure ratio accounting for combustion-induced compression of the unburned mixture. The dimensionless factor β accounts for the effect of spark timing on geometric distortion of the flame which occurs during the first combustion stage and persists into the later stages.

The researchers also observed that the burning velocity in the second stage increases in proportion to flame radius, and that in predicting the energy release rate from the burning velocity equation, it is necessary to account for the finite flame-front thickness.

"The form of our burning equation," says Dr. Matekunas, "shows a satisfying resemblance to expressions for non-engine flames. This helps link complex engine combustion phenomena to the existing body of knowledge on turbulent flames."

"We see this extension," adds Dr. Groff, "as a significant step toward optimizing fuel economy in automotive engines."

THE MEN BEHIND THE WORK

Drs. Matekunas and Groff are senior engineers in the Engine Research Department at the General Motors Research Laboratories.

Both researchers hold undergraduate and graduate degrees in the field of mechanical engineering.

Dr. Matekunas (right) received his M.S. and Ph. D. from Purdue University, where he completed graduate work in advanced optics applications.

Dr. Groff (left) received an M.S. from California Institute of Technology and a Ph. D. from The Pennsylvania State University. His doctoral thesis explored the combustion of liquid metals.

General Motors welcomed Dr. Matekunas to its staff in 1973, and Dr. Groff in 1977.

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successful, but his real celebrity has come from television and the lecture platform. By way of them, he has succeeded in endearing George Plimpton, and parody itself, to Everyman.

Plimpton is not exactly Everyman. The son of a distinguished New York lawyer and diplomat, he graduated from Harvard, took a master's degree at Cambridge, and shortly thereafter helped found a literary periodical, *The Paris Review*, of which (unknown, surely, to all but a tiny fraction of latter-day Plimpton fans) he is still editor. After a spell of floundering, at age thirty-four he published *Out of My League,* a rueful account of his fling on the mound for the Yankees, and was on his way. He had discovered a life of parody.

Plimpton clearly does not have to work at parody intellectually; it comes naturally, perhaps instinctively, to him. For example, by way of a hobby he is an expert on and an enthusiastic exhibitor of fireworks. In American cultural iconography, fireworks represent naive patriotism, unguarded enthusiasm, simpleminded spectacle—everything a well-bred northeastern liberal intellectual might conventionally be expected to regard with distaste or disdain. A strain of self-parody crops up in all of Plimpton's capers; in this one, it is dominant. Again, it is beyond question that Plimpton is a good enough writer to have achieved reputation and ample fortune as a writer pure and simple. If we study his style, we have no trouble determining why he was not content to do that. It would have been too close to what might logically have been expected of him.

A striking and illuminating bit of Plimptoniana is the fact that, from time to time in recent years, he has lent his voice and presence to television and radio commercials, principally for a New York City savings bank and an international shipping line. (In the latter case, he went so far as to allow himself to be used as bait, offering the opportunity to meet him on a cruise as an inducement to people to sign up for it.) Instantly and predictably, a chorus went up from Plimpton's friends and acquaintances: "What an outrage, George shilling for commercial enterprises on the mass media. This time he's gone too far. He has no shame. He'll do anything for money." While it is hard to believe that Plimpton did the shilling in a calculated effort to elicit this reaction, it is equally hard to believe that he was seriously disturbed by it. Doubtless it is true, as Plimpton has been quoted as saying, that he did it for the money; after all, he has extravagant tastes. But surely that is only a partial explanation. Somewhere deep down, perhaps in the Plimpton unconscious, there might be found the origin of a mischievous impulse to revel in what his own "set" would consider beyond the pale, the most blatant and deliberate of affronts to their mandarin tastes and manners.

Certainly there is about Plimpton's career a whiff of the ancient phenomenon of *le roi s'amuse*—inherited privilege providing both the material resources and the inner self-confidence to enable a life of elaborate jokes performed in public. But Plimpton is also part of something new. In a democratic state with progressive income taxes and an ironic view of privilege, even George Plimpton has to make his own way to fame. For a king to amuse himself now, he must first make of himself a king. Life parody is *le roi s'amuse* adapted for democracy. □

MY MOTHER'S CHESS
by David Solway

She plays a curious game;
unexpectedly will strike
from any quarter in a storm
of near-perpetual check

and yet at the end expose
a too-long forgotten king
or for no good reason lose
her queen, quite as confusing
as confused. Does her better
nature gain the upper hand,
the inveterate sweetness there,
incapacity to reprimand?—

which makes for dubious chess
but an indulgent parent.
I might have wished it otherwise:
better chess; less lenient.

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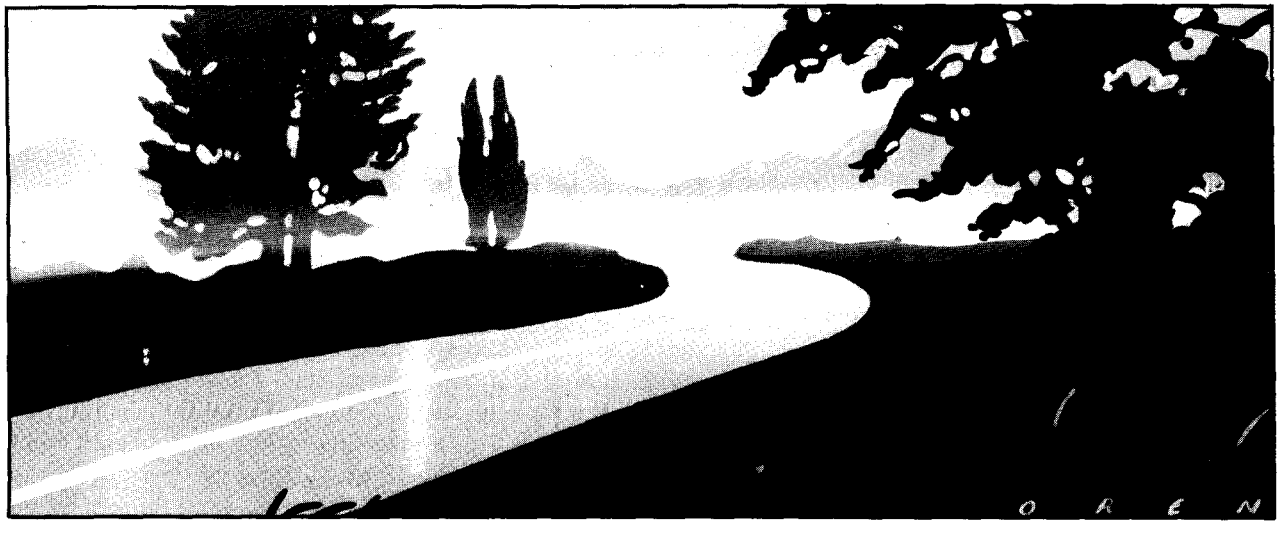
THE HONORED DEAD

A story by B. D'J. Pancake



Watching little Lundy go back to sleep, I wish I hadn't told her about the Mound Builders to stop her crying, but I didn't know she would see their eyes watching her in the dark. She was crying about a cat run down by a car—her cat, run down a year ago, only today poor Lundy figured it out. Lundy is turned too much like her momma. Ellen never worries because it takes her too long to catch the point of a thing, and Ellen doesn't have any problem sleeping. I think my folks were a little too keen, but Lundy is her momma's girl, not jumpy like my folks.

My grandfather always laid keenness on his Shawnee blood, his half-breed mother, but then he was hep on blood. He even had an oath to stop bleeding, but I don't remember the words. He was a fair to sharp woodsman, and we all tried to slip up on him at one time or another. It was Ray at the sugar mill finally caught him, but he was an old man by then, and his mind wasn't exactly right. Ray just came creeping up behind and laid a hand on his shoulder, and the old bird didn't even turn around; he just wagged his head and said, "That's Ray's hand. He's the first fellow ever slipped on me." Ray could've done without that because the old man never played with a full deck again, and we couldn't keep clothes on him before he died.

I turn out the lamp, see no eyes in Lundy's room,

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then it comes to me why she was so scared. Yesterday I told her patches of stories about scalpings and murders, mixed up the Mound Builders with the Shawnee raids, and Lundy chained that with the burial mound in the back pasture. Tomorrow I'll set her straight. The only surefire thing I know about Mound Builders is they must have believed in a god and hereafter or they never would have made such big graves.

I put on my jacket, go into the foggy night, walk toward town. Another hour till dawn, and both lanes of the Pike are empty, so I walk the yellow line running through the valley to Rock Camp. I keep thinking back to the summer me and my buddy Eddie tore that burial mound apart for arrowheads and copper beads gone green with rot. We were getting down to the good stuff, coming up with skulls galore, when of a sudden Grandad showed out of thin air and yelled, "*Wah-pah-nah-te-he.*" He was waving his arms around, and I could see Eddie was about to shit the nest. I knew it was all part of the old man's Injun act, so I stayed put, but Eddie sat down like he was ready to surrender.

Grandad kept on: "*Wah-pah-nah-te-he.* You evil. Make bad medicine here. Now put the goddamned bones back or I'll take a switch to your young asses." He watched us bury the bones, then scratched a picture of a man in the dust, a bow drawn, aimed at a crude sun. "Now go home." He walked across the pasture.

Eddie said, "You Red Eagle. Me Black Hawk." I knew he had bought the game for keeps. By then I couldn't tell Eddie that if Grandad had a shot at the sixty-four-dollar question, he would have sold them on those Injun words: *Wah-pah-nah-te-he*—the fat of my ass.

So I walk and try to be like Ellen and count the pass-at-your-own-risk marks on the road. Eastbound tramples Westbound: 26–17. At home is my own darling Ellen, fast asleep, never knowing who won. Sometimes I wonder if Ellen saw Eddie on his last leave. There are lightning bugs in the fog, and I count them until I figure I'm counting the same ones over. For sure, Lundy would call them Mound Builder eyes, and see them as signals without a message, make up her own message, get scared.

I turn off the Pike onto the oxbow of Front Street, walk past some dark store windows, watch myself moving by their gloss, rippling through one pane and another. I sit on the Old Bank steps, wait for the sun to come over the hills; wait like I waited for the bus to the draft physical, only I'm not holding a bar of soap. I sat and held a bar of soap, wondering if I should shove it under my arm to hike my blood pressure into the 4-F range. My blood pressure was already high, but the bar of soap would give me an edge. I look around at Front Street and picture people and places I haven't thought of in years; I wonder if it was that way for Eddie.

I put out my hand like the bar of soap was in it, and see its whiteness reflect blue from the streetlights long ago. And I remember Eddie's hand flattened on green felt, arched knuckles cradling the cue for a tough eight-ball shot, or I remember the way his hand curled around his pencil to hide answers on math tests. I remember his hand holding an arrowhead or unscrewing a lug nut, but I can't remember his face.

It was years ago, on Decoration Day, and my father and several other men wore their Ike jackets, and I was in the band. We marched through town to the cemetery in the rain; then I watched the men move sure and stiff with each command, and the timing between volleys was on the nose; the echoes rang four times above the clatter of their bolt weapons. The rain smelled from the tang of their fire, the wet wool of our uniforms. There was a pause and the band director coughed. I stepped up to play, a little off tempo, and another kid across the hills answered my taps. I finished first, snapped my bugle back. When the last tone seeped through to mist, it beat at me, and I could swear I heard the stumps of Eddie's arms beating the coffin lid for us to stop.

I look down at my hand holding the bugle, the bar of soap. I look at my hand, empty, older, tell myself there is no bar of soap in that hand. I count all five fingers with the other hand, tell myself they are going to stay there a hell of a long time. I get out a cigarette and smoke. Out on the Pike, the first car races by in the darkness, knowing no cops are out yet. I think of Eddie pouring on the gas, heading with me down the Pike toward Tin Bridge.

That day was bright, but the blink of all the dome lights showed up far ahead of us. We couldn't keep still for the excitement, couldn't wait to see what happened.

I said, "Did you hear it, man? I thought they'd dropped the Bomb."

"Hear? I felt it. The damn ground shook."

"They won't forget that much noise for a long time."

"For sure."

Cars were stopped dead-center of the road, and a crowd had built up. Eddie pulled off to the side behind a patrol car, and made his way through the crowd

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B.D'J. Pancake, who studied writing at the University of Virginia under James Alan McPherson, died suddenly last spring.

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holding his wallet high to show his volunteer fireman's badge. I kept back, but in the break the cops made, I saw the fire was already out, and all that was left of Beck Fuller's Chevy was the grille, the rest of the metal peeled around it from behind. I knew it was Beck's from the '51 grille, and I knew what had happened. Beck fished with dynamite and primer cord, and he was a real sport to the end. Beck could never get into his head he had to keep the cord away from the TNT.

Then a trooper yelled: "All right, make way for the wrecker."

Eddie and the other firemen put pieces of Beck the Sport into bags, and I turned away to keep from barfing, but the smell of burning hair drifted out to me. I knew hair was the stuffing in old car seats, and not Beck, but I leaned against the patrol car, tossed my cookies just the same. I wanted to stop being sick because it was silly to be sick about something like that. Under the noise of my coughings I could hear the fire chief cussing Eddie into just getting the big pieces, just letting the rest go.

Eddie didn't sit here with any bar of soap in his hand. He never had much gray matter, but he made up for it with style, so he would never sit here with any bar of soap in his hand. Eddie would never think about blowing toes away or cutting off his trigger finger. It just was not his way to think. Eddie was the kind who bought into a game early, and when the deal soured, he'd rather hold the hand a hundred years than fold. It was just his way of doing.

At eight ball, I chalked up while Eddie broke. The pool balls cracked, but nothing went in, and I moved around the table to pick the choice shot. "It's crazy to join," I said.

"What the hell—I know how to weld. They'll put me in welding school and I'll sit it out in Norfolk."

"With your luck the ship'll fall on you."

"Come on, Eagle, go in buddies with me."

"Me and Ellen's got plans. I'll take a chance with the lottery." I shot, and three went in.

"That's slop," Eddie said.

I ran the other four down, banked the eight ball to a side pocket, and stood back, made myself grin at him. The eight went where I called it, but I never believed I made the shot right, and I didn't look at Eddie, I just grinned.

I toss my cigarette into the gutter, and it glows back orange under the blue streetlight. I think how that glow would be just another eye for Lundy, and think that after a while she will see so many eyes in the night they won't matter anymore. The eyes will go away and never come back, and even if I tell her when she is grown, she won't remember. By then real eyes will scare her enough. She's Ellen's girl, and sometimes I want to ask Ellen if she saw Eddie on his last leave.

Time ago I stood with my father in the cool evening shadow of the barn to smoke; he stooped, picked up a handful of gravel, and flipped them away with his thumb. He studied on what I said about Canada, and each gravel falling was a little click in his thoughts; then he stood, dusted his palms. "I didn't mind it too much," he said. "Me and Howard kept pretty thick in foxhole religion—never thought of running off."

"But, Dad, when I seen Eddie in that plastic bag . . ."

He yelled: "Why the hell'd you look? If you can't take it, you oughtn't to look. You think I ain't seen that? That and worse, by God."

I rub my hand across my face, hang my arm tight against the back of my neck, think I ought to be home asleep with Ellen. I think, if I was asleep with Ellen, I wouldn't care who won. I wouldn't count or want to know what the signals mean, and I wouldn't be like some dog looking for something dead to drag in.

When Eddie was in boot camp, me and Ellen sat naked in the loft at midnight, scratching fleas and the itch of hay. She went snooping through a box of old books and papers, and pulled out a bundle of letters tied with sea grass string. Her flashlight beamed over my eyes as she stepped back to me, and watching her walk in the color tracings the light left in my eyes, I knew she would be my wife. She tossed the package in my lap, and I saw the old V-mail envelopes of my father's war letters. Ellen lay flat on her back, rested her head on my thigh, and I took up the flashlight to read.

"*Dear folks, We are in*—the name's been cut out."

"Why?" She rolled to her stomach, looked up at me.

I shrugged. "I guess he didn't know he couldn't say that. *The way they do thes people is awful bad. I found a rusky prisoner starven in the street and took him to a german house for a feed.*" I felt Ellen's tongue on the inside of my thigh and shivered, tried to keep reading. *"They didn't do nothin for him till I leveled off with my gun and Howard he raised hell with me only I seen that rusky eat one damn fine meal."* I turned off the flashlight, moved down beside Ellen. He had never told that story.

But it's not so simple now as then, not easy to be a part of Ellen without knowing or wanting to know the web our kisses make. It was easy to leave the house with a bar of soap in my pocket; only the hardest

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part was sitting here, looking at it, and remembering.

I went through the hall with the rest of the kids between classes, and there stood Eddie at the top of the stairs. He grinned at me, but it was not his face anymore. His face had changed; a face gone red because the other kids snickered at his uniform. He stood at parade rest, his seaman's cap hanging from his belt, his head tilting back to look down on me, then he dragged his hands around like Jackie Gleason taking an away-we-go pool shot. We moved on down the hall to ditch my books.

"You on leave?" I said.

"Heap bad medicine. Means I'm getting shipped."

"How long?" I fumbled with the combination of my locker.

"Ten days," he said, then squinted at the little flag upside-down on my open locker door. "You sucker."

I watched him until he went out of sight down the steps, then got my books, went on to class.

The butt of my palm is speckled with black spots deep under the skin: cinders from a relay-race fall. The skin has sealed them over, and it would cost plenty to get them out. Sometimes Ellen wants to play nurse with a needle, wants to pry them out, but I won't let her. Sometimes I want to ask Ellen if she saw Eddie on his last leave.

Coach said I couldn't run track because anyone not behind his country was not fit for a team, so I sat under the covered bridge waiting for the time I could go home. Every car passing over sprinkled a little dust between the boards, sifted it into my hair.

I watched the narrow river roll by, its waters slow but muddy like pictures I had seen of rivers on the TV news. In history class, Coach said the Confederate troops attacked this bridge, took it, but were held by a handful of Sherman's troops on Company Hill. Johnny Reb drank from this river. The handful had a spring on Company Hill. Johnny croaked with the typhoid and the Yankees moved south. So I stood and brushed the dust off me. My hair grew long after Eddie went over, and I washed it every night.

I put my fist under my arm like the bar of soap, and watch the veins on the back of my hand rise with pressure. There are scars where I've barked the hide hooking the disc or the drag to my tractor; they are like my father's scars.

We walked the fields, checked the young cane for blight or bugs, and the late sun gave my father's slick hair a sparkle. He chewed the stem of his pipe, then stood with one leg across a knee, and banged tobacco out against his shoe.

I worked up the guts: "You reckon I could go to college, Dad?"

"What's wrong with farming?"

"Well, sir, nothing, if that's all you ever want."

He crossed the cane rows to get me, and my left went up to guard like Eddie taught me, right kept low and to the body.

"Cute," he said. "Real cute. When's your number up?"

I dropped my guard. "When I graduate—it's the only chance I got to stay out."

He loaded his pipe, turned around in his tracks like he was looking for something, then stopped, facing the hills. "It's your damn name is what it is. Dad said when you was born, 'Call him William Haywood, and if he ever goes in a mine, I hope he chokes to death.' "

I thought that was a shitty thing for Grandad to do, but I watched Dad, hoped he'd let me go.

He started up: "Everybody's going to school to be something better. Well, when everybody's going this way, it's time to turn around and go that way, you know?" He motioned with his hands in two directions. "I don't care if they end up shitting gold nuggets, somebody's got to dig in the damn ground. Somebody's got to."

And I said, "Yessir."

The sky is dark blue and the fog is cold smoke staying low to the ground. In this first hint of light my hand seems blue, but not cold; such gets cold sooner or later, but for now my hand is warm.

Many's the time my grandfather told of the last strike before he quit the mines, moved to the valley for some peace. He would quit his Injun act when he told it, like it was real again, all before him, and pretty soon I started thinking it was *me* the Baldwin bulls were after. *I* ran through the woods till my lungs bled. *I* could hear the Baldwins and their dogs in the dark woods, and *I* could remember machine guns cutting down pickets, and all *I* could think was how the One Big Union was down the rathole. Then I could taste it in my mouth, taste the blood coming up from my lungs, feel the bark of a tree root where I fell, where I slept. When I opened my eyes, I felt funny in the gut, felt watched. There were no twig-snaps, just the feeling that something was too close. Knowing it was a man, one man, hunting me, I took up my revolver. I could hear him breathing, aimed into the sound, knowing the only sight would come with the flash. I knew all my life I had lived to kill this man, this goddamned Baldwin man, and I couldn't do it. I heard him move away down the ridge, hunting his lost game.

I fold my arms tight like I did the morning the bus

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pulled up. I was thinking of my grandfather, and there was a bar of soap under my arm. At the draft physical, my blood pressure was clear out of sight, and they kept me four days. The pressure never went down, and on the fourth day a letter came by forward. I read it on the bus home.

Eddie said he was with a bunch of Jarheads in the Crotch, and he repaired radio gear in the field. He said the USMC's hated him because he was regular Navy. He said the chow was rotten, the quarters lousy, and the left side of his chest was turning yellow from holding smokes inside his shirt at night. And he said he knew how the guy felt when David sent him into the battle to get dibs on the guy's wife. Eddie said he wanted dibs on Ellen, ha, ha. He said he would get married and give me his wife if I would get him out of there. He said the beer came in Schlitz cans, but he was sure it was something else. Eddie was sure the CO was a fag. He said he would like to get Ellen naked, but if he stayed with this outfit he would want to get me naked when he came back. He asked if I remembered him teaching me to burn off leeches with a cigarette. Eddie swore he learned that in a movie where the hero dies because he ran out of cigarettes. He said he had plenty of cigarettes. He said he could never go Oriental because they don't have any hair on their twats, and he bet me he knew what color Ellen's bush was. He said her hair might be brown, but her bush was red. He said to think about it and say Hi to Ellen for him until he came back. Sometimes I want to ask Ellen if she saw Eddie on his last leave.

When I came back, Ellen met me at the trailer door, hugged me, and started to cry. She showed pretty well with Lundy, and I told her Eddie's letter said to say Hi. She cried some more, and I knew Eddie was not coming back.

Daylight fires the ridges green, shifts the colors of the fog, touches the brick streets of Rock Camp with a reddish tone. The streetlights flicker out, and the traffic signal at the far end of Front Street's yoke snaps on; stopping nothing, warning nothing, rushing nothing on.

I stand and my joints crack from sitting too long, but the flesh of my face is warming in the early sun. I climb the steps of the Old Bank, draw a spook in the window-soap. I tell myself that spook is Eddie's, and I wipe it off with my sleeve, then I see the bus coming down the Pike, tearing the morning, and I start down the street so he won't stop for me. I cannot go away, and I cannot make Eddie go away, so I go home. And walking down the street as the bus goes by, I bet myself a million that my Lundy is up and already watching cartoons, and I bet I know who won. □

WILDFIRE
by Dave Smith

Crackling like fear in the child's heart late awakened,
the parents have gone into nightmare,
on the night lake of darkness
far away are carried, and the house
dreadfully closes.

It smiles like dawn in the wide western window.
No one believes this ever.
But there is glass-flutter.

There is wind hungering and the far sister
of the aspen trying to crawl.

Then it will be seen to leap the ridge distance
going entirely.
Something has come in the dark, touching.
But the air wonderfully now

is sheepish and light lacquers all.

Snow-light nearly, down,
the singlet of geese travelers,
something like a word from the north,

this wholeness fully breathable
heaping its handful of gray on the ground.
Like mist and fog from a mill-town rising
as if the earth had been just
created,

as it has,

and memory's hand opening above the coverlet,
and the family mouth open
and all over.

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THE RISE OF THE NEWSOCRACY

All The News All The Time

by Louis Banks

The press is increasingly becoming the arbiter of American life—and the values of the media are not always the values of the society they serve.

Viewers who chanced to switch to Washington's channel 4 (WRC-TV) on the evening of March 28, 1979, found themselves looking down the barrel of an ordinary hand-held hair dryer. "This is not a gun, and it doesn't shoot bullets," said the voice-over. "But what comes out can be just as deadly." The program was the result of nine months' investigation by WRC's "Consumer Action" team, and for the extraordinary span of nearly twenty minutes ("without commercial interruption"), it developed a case that Americans were in considerable peril because many hand-held hair dryers were spewing fibers from asbestos insulation. Making the connection between the ingestion of asbestos fibers and the death rates from various forms of lung cancer, investigator Lea Thompson said gravely, "How many of those [deaths] can be attributed to hair dryers . . . no one knows."

By consumerist standards, the program was a stunning success. Such companies as Hamilton Beach, General Electric, Norelco, Sears, Penney's, and Montgomery Ward, all named as culprits, were besieged by angry customers. Gillette and American Electric, which had long used mica instead of asbestos for insulation, were exonerated on the program, but besieged nonetheless. The Consumer Products Safety Commission, a federal agency, was stung into confusion and open hearings, subsequently forcing a voluntary recall of asbestos-insulated dryers. A Senate consumer subcommittee opened hearings and called Ms. Thompson as a star witness.

By media standards as well, the program scored high. Reversing the usual practice, print media "picked up" the exposé from a local television station and gave it wide coverage. The UPI accounts were reprinted in hundreds of newspapers. Channel 4 being an NBC affiliate, the story made the NBC evening news. It was subsequently featured on both NBC's *Today* show and ABC's *Good Morning America.* (One manufacturer feared that his business would be destroyed just by David Hartman's silent scowl of disapproval as he looked at a hand-held dryer; it wasn't.) The WRC investigation team won the George Polk Award for Distinguished Journalism. And the "genuine coup" was eulogized in a two-page essay in *People*, which revealed what the TV camera had not: that Lea Thompson, the daughter of a journalist and a University of Wisconsin graduate in journalism and

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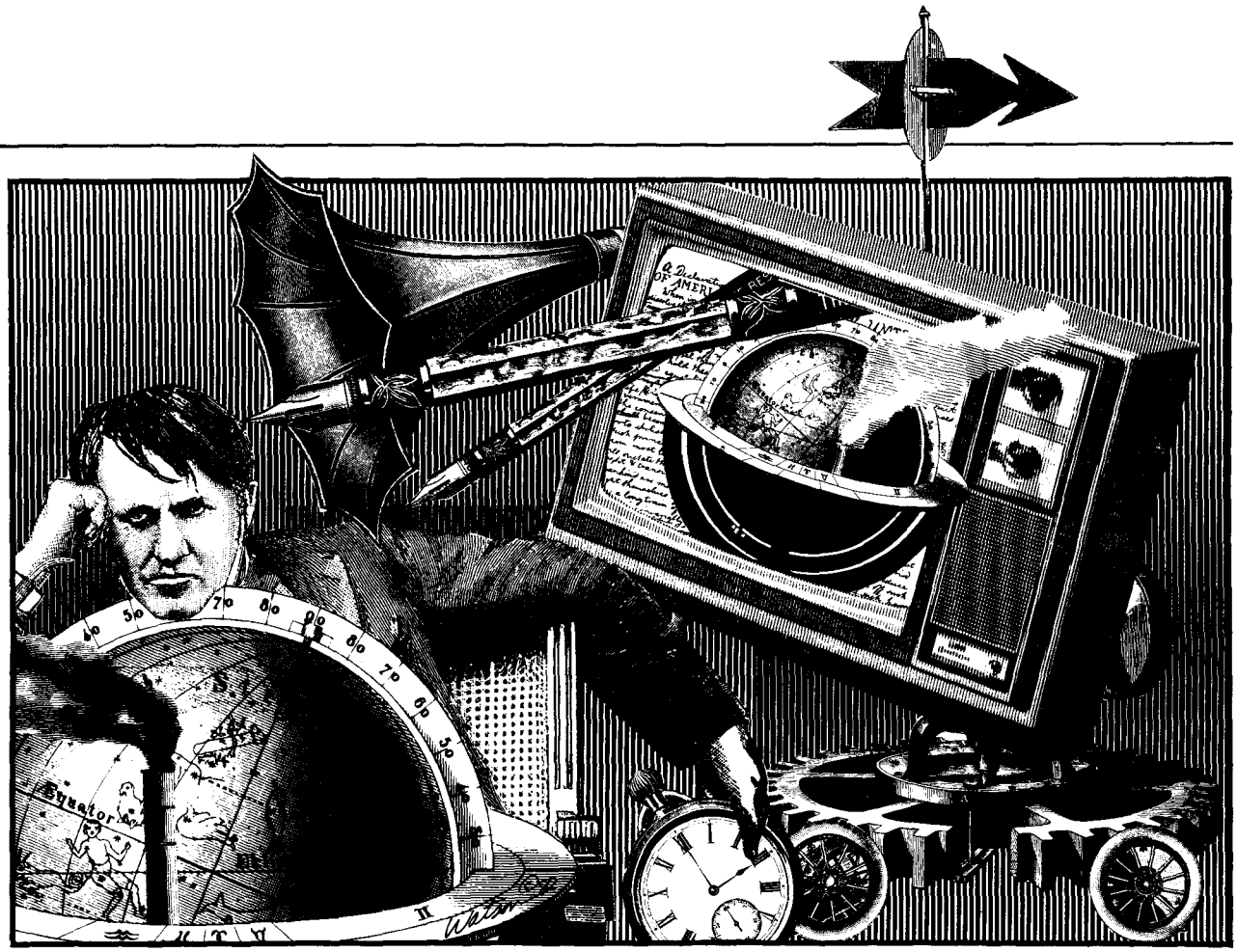

marketing, was eight and a half months pregnant at the time of the story.

The strong combination of action pictures, whirring motors, stern interviews, and authoritative explanations certainly alerted millions of Americans in record time to the asbestos fiber problem. But the consumerist consequences, as important as they were, can be seen as part of a much larger societal point. We are rapidly approaching a situation in which reporting is the arbiter of other institutions in American life; in this microcosmic case we see and hear it imposing its own values, standards, and priorities with irresistible impact on agencies of both government and business.

The point is made more broadly when we review the principal categories of news coverage over the past decade. The media—and particularly television—take credit for turning the public against the Vietnam War ("the living room war") and forcing its termination. "Watergate was the greatest journalistic triumph of the twentieth century," wrote one correspondent for Columbia University's "Survey of Broadcast Journalism," and unrelenting media attention certainly prompted the politics that forced President Nixon's resignation. Journalistic coverage was a prime mover in forcing government agencies and boards of directors to ventilate a series of corporate scandals in the mid-1970s, the most notable investigations of which led to the dismissal of top management at the 3M Corporation and the Gulf Oil Company, and eventually to anti-bribery legislation. The emergence of President Sadat of Egypt as a folk hero and the constant television posturing of the principals in the Iranian hostage crisis suggest that we have, through media coverage, carried foreign policy into a period of "mass diplomacy," as Flora Lewis of the New York *Times* describes it.

One can pursue the point through the agenda of quality-of-life issues: consumerism, dating back to the elevation of Ralph Nader to national prominence; ecology and environmentalism, ranging from the effect of supersonic transports on the ionosphere to the greenhouse effect to acid rain; energy concerns, from offshore oil spills to the hazards of coal and nuclear power; safety in the workplace, with latter-day attention to potential carcinogens; toxicity, from Kepone to Love Canal.

Such is merely the stuff of news, one might argue. And to a degree this is true. But to another degree these areas represent coverage by selection, which suggests an imposition of media values and standards in contrast, perhaps, to the values and standards of other institutions. In writing *The Brethren*, their gossipy best seller on the disrobed U.S. Supreme Court, Bob Woodward and Scott Armstrong noted proudly in a preface that they had breached "the authority, tradi-

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tions and protocols" of the Court to subject it to journalistic inspection for the first time. Some critics doubted that this inspection did much for the set of values involved in the American system of justice.

It is becoming clear that the increasingly pervasive power of the media is central to the development of most other American institutions. We are, in fact, becoming what might be called a "newsocracy." The technology and substance of today's newscasting combine for an impact greater than that of any other informational force in the history of democratic societies—redirecting even the traditional processes of politics. This is a matter of social consequence, because some aspects of media value judgment might be perceived as being at odds with the general welfare. Accordingly, I would argue that affected "others" (e.g. government agencies, educational institutions, and publicly held corporations) have both a right and a duty to enter the informational competition. This contention should not be interpreted as a challenge to press freedom; rather it is an acceptance of today's news coverage for what it is, and an attempt to broaden its intellectual vision in the interests of the society that the First Amendment serves.

In my view, media dominance has been powerfully abetted by two major trends of the past decade. One is a widening perception of the interaction of one kind of endeavor upon another in the post-industrial society. To a certain extent this integrative process has always been manifested in political reform movements, but it gained a kind of personal relevance in the so-called youth movement of the late sixties and early seventies. It has, loosely, been called "holism." The second is a spreading of public awareness, the sense of direct participation in events, which has loosely been described as "populism." These two trends, combined with video technology, have stepped up the power of journalistic influence.

Recently MIT's *Technology Review* gathered a group of the nation's top science writers from print and television to talk about "Science, Technology and the Press." Science is their beat, but as they contrasted the simpler days of "happy talk" reporting with the multidimensional demands of today's assignments, they could be speaking for almost any group of earnest journalistic specialists. David Perlman of the San Francisco *Chronicle* saw science reporting broadening into "the politics of science or public affairs emerging from science." Mark Dowie of *Mother Jones* spoke of the reader's desire to know about "the interface between science and technology and even more, about the interface between technology and the corporate world because . . . that's where science ceases to be apolitical." Cristine Russell of the Washington *Star* confessed that "coverage of recombinant DNA, for example, was always 'biased' toward its possible impact on the public and not toward special interests—be they science or the government, or whatever." This group, gathered soon after Three Mile Island, was properly humble about the responsibilities involved in the widening media function, yet, by implication, quite confident that nobody else could perform it as well. (As a reflection of this attitude, the cover of *Technology Review* pictured a youthful reporter opening his shirt to show a Superman emblem across his chest.)

But if interrelatedness has inspired complex reportorial judgments, populism inspires a broad simplicity—or a low common denominator. Network news not only has usurped the role of the newspaper as the principal source of information, but has constantly increased the number of people who make news-watching part of their lives. For example, ABC-TV, proud of its recent high news ratings, believes that its audience is drawn mostly from people who never before watched TV news regularly. "I don't think there's any doubt that we've created a heightened consciousness of the news," says a vice president of research. Also, there is no doubt that of the three networks, ABC has the most kinetic and visually stimulating and the least mentally taxing news format.

Nobody is more aware than the network professionals of the lowest-common-denominator aspect of their work. Four years ago, Walter Cronkite expressed concern to the Radio and Television News Directors' Association: "We fall far short of presenting all, or even a goodly part, of the news each day that a citizen would need to intelligently exercise his franchise in this democracy. So as he depends more and more on us, presumably the depth of knowledge of the average man diminishes. This clearly can lead to a disaster in a democracy."

"Disaster" may be too strong a word, but TV news does seem to be changing some meanings of democracy by offering a simplistic kind of interrelatedness. For example, one consequence has been the translation of hitherto abstract or impersonal subjects into people, places, and crises. The administration of justice becomes the judge, the lawyer, or the criminal (and his family). The presidency is words, facial expressions, today's necktie, and Amy and Rosalynn in the background. The political convention is almost a plaything of television personalities. A plant closing is people wondering aloud what they will do next—and a con-

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gressman sympathizing. A gasoline shortage is angry customers and angry service station operators damning the oil companies—and a congressman sympathizing. A nuclear power accident is pregnant women in tears—and nervous officials trying to cope with a backwash of emotion as well as with unknowns of physics.

In their embrace of holism the media—already under pressure to produce specialists in such areas as science, finance, energy, and business—play an interdisciplinary role. To do so, the "supermen" who take this role seriously apply themselves to continuous learning. Yet we see some television journalism that could lead a long way toward Cronkite's "disaster."

Electronic journalism can claim antecedents in the rich history of radio reporting during and after World War II, and many of the leading figures of television news, including Cronkite, have struggled to keep alive that heritage. But TV news is also the bastard child of the entertainment industry. All commercial media contract in one way or another to deliver a certain audience to advertisers, but in the case of the three major networks, variations in audience size, as measured by the ratings, represent millions of dollars in advertising revenue. That fact is reflected in news selectivity, and leads to an image of the world projected daily, competitively, and with striking homogeneity on the evening news.

Since network news was, by definition, confined to national news (so as not to transgress the domain of a network's local TV affiliates), cameras focused on a minimal number of recognizable characters from Washington and New York; the more they could be translated into villains or heroes, the easier the journalistic assignment and the higher the audience attention. The visual nature of the medium put a premium on color, movement, excitement, sensation, novelty. There has always lurked in modern journalism the knowledge that bad news sells better than good. Witness the proliferation of the "question mark" headline, which suggests a threat to mankind on a speculative basis. Under competitive pressures, this stress on anxiety and negativism came to prominence in television.

Attitudinal researchers have wondered for some time about survey results that showed a discrepancy between the average citizen's dim view of government, business, education, etc., and his/her relative satisfaction with the company that he/she works for, the way local government functions, the schools the kids go to. Assessing the data for the 1970s, Everett Carll Ladd Jr. and Seymour Martin Lipset concluded: "To some considerable degree this contradiction may reflect the difference between the steady dose of disasters which people get from television, and their personal experiences."

It is not difficult to project such rogue trends into a gloomy prospect. "Disaster" would not be far if the nation came to see itself primarily through the lenses of critics with an addiction to novelty or blood and guts, and no responsibility for consequences. Not only would the democratic process suffer from a diminished "depth of knowledge," as Cronkite has it, but something vital could be lost if responsible leaders of other institutions were regularly consumed by the "bite 'em off, chew 'em up, spit 'em out" habits of television news.

Some critics think they see this approach already manifest in the techniques of *60 Minutes*, designed to provide the controversy which keeps that weekly "newsmagazine" at the top of the Nielsen ratings. In 1979 the Illinois Power Company of Decatur allowed *60 Minutes* access to the construction site of its nuclear power plant at Clinton to film a segment on escalating nuclear construction costs. Illinois Power's one condition was that it be allowed to put its own cameras alongside those of *60 Minutes* to film everything seen and said in the interviews. The broadcast *60 Minutes* segment, in fact, found Illinois Power guilty of mismanagement of the power project. But by playing its version of what was said and explained, spliced with excerpts from the *60 Minutes* telecast, Illinois Power made a persuasive case for having been the victim of dramatic and serious distortion.

This and similar examples raise the question of whether, in TV's stress on "populism," corporations exist primarily to provide a ready source of "heavies" in the manufactured dramas that hold those customers and those Nielsen ratings.

Media judgments, of course, do not occur in a vacuum. As Illinois Power found out, the media's stories powerfully affect the "others" who are the objects of their attention, and their composite story defines the society for millions of people. The principal problem in a newsocracy is that there is, at the moment, no force to offset the net range and impact of today's informational technology. Since the constructive and the exploitative forces of journalism are constantly in tension, with no certainty about the outcome, it behooves other affected institutions to recognize the problem and accept the fact that they, too, have a stake in the battle.

The beginning of such counterstrategy is the realization that the "others" have allies within the media. Professional journalists can recognize the short-term, audience-grabbing excesses and know that the long-term test is credibility. One catches the essence of

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embattled professionalism in a credo voiced by David Perlman during that *Technology Review* forum on science-related reporting.

"There are some things," he said, "that we can properly do . . . . We can look for self-serving statements. We can expose biases that exist. We can expose lies; scientists lie occasionally, like everybody else, and they're going to lie publicly at times. So that's our job. It's not to say whether nuclear power is bad or good. Present the debate and be very careful about ascribing expertise to those who are experts."

Professionalism is at work in the development of such thoughtful interpreters of science as Perlman and his colleagues, and in the training of specialists in business and economic affairs as well. As generations change, more and more business and economic news is being handled by editors and reporters who are educated in business practice, rather than by "general assignment" people. This new sophistication is evident in many regional newspapers, whose healthy intellectual diversity is thinning out the New York- and Washington-centered judgments of the national media. Even the TV networks are learning to give more discretion to their economics editors, who, while constrained to simplisms by time limitations on camera, can sometimes moderate the more sensationalist anti-business onslaughts of their general-assignment colleagues.

The first step for "others," then, is to support and encourage media professionals by providing them with information that makes them better able to report factually and to perform the demanding integrative function. But there is more to it than that. All affected institutions must realize that a newsocracy is a different kind of environment, and that they must engage with that environment in a different way. Perhaps the media's concern with interrelatedness provides a clue. If a firm can come to think of itself not only in economic terms but as a unit in a network of social and political values, then it need have no unreasonable fears about explaining itself to media that seek to understand just those relationships. This requires, first, that a company learn to see and feel itself in the consciousness of its particular publics and infuse that sense of public-relatedness into every level of its operations.

For example, the Mobil Corporation's controversial "op-ed" advocacy campaign, which has been a fixture on the editorial pages of influential newspapers, was developed as a result of Mobil's analysis of the political and social prospects for the company and the oil industry. "We decided more than ten years ago that our problem was literally one of survival in a hostile external climate; it was more political than economic," says Herbert Schmertz, Mobil's vice president for corporate affairs and the principal architect of the campaign. "We decided to enter the argument through the media and thus put our case before people whose opinions count." Not everybody likes Mobil's abrasive style—which on occasion has drawn the wrath of the President of the United States—but critics would be hard put to deny that Mobil's editorial insistence has brought new facts to the public debate on energy, and in the process has influenced editorial thought and political action.

Exxon and Shell, affronted by charges of duplicity in an NBC-TV series in late 1979, eschewed flamboyant counterpunches and took their respective cases to the National News Council. In both situations the council examined the facts and came down hard against NBC, agreeing in the Exxon case that the telecast contained "factual error, the selective use of information, lack of perspective, and the building of effect through innuendo."

The reaction of the Gillette Company in the hand-held hair dryer exposé reflects a more positive, and perhaps more internal, kind of operational public-relatedness. Out of its tradition of precise quality control of razor blades, Gillette long ago gave consumer concern high priority and set up a medical test laboratory for all its products. In 1964, the company named Robert Giovacchini, a Ph.D. in medical science, head of the lab; ten years later, he was made vice president for product integrity and given final review of the medical safety of new products and of marketing and advertising claims relating to medical safety. In addition, his group performs a quality review of new and existing products. In 1973 he directed a redesign for the hand-held hair dryers that substituted mica for asbestos as an insulator, even though asbestos particle emissions from Gillette dryers averaged only 5 percent of the maximum allowable under OSHA standards.

Of all the major hair dryer companies, only Gillette offered to help the producers of the WRC-TV program. David Fausch, vice president of corporate public relations and a former *Business Week* editor, argued internally that the story would be told more accurately if Gillette supplied accurate data. It helped, of course, that Gillette was "clean." It helped, too, that in return the program's producers warned in advance of the screening so that Gillette could alert its sales force and its merchandisers to possible trouble. In the fallout, Gillette did not escape damage—and did not really expect to. The relevant point is that the company's operations had long since been sensitive to public concerns, and it could move smoothly into a media spotlight with a clear understanding of its own objectives, and without fear that the world would end if it did not win all the points in the telecast.

Such an approach, in my view, is far more sophisticated than conventional public relations. It is corporate acceptance of the same long-term values that concern

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the responsible media, and it reflects the First Amendment premise that everybody benefits when the terms of the debate are broadened. The media, after all, live on information, and "others" can influence the outcome by providing accurate material. It is a corollary, of course, that "others" have a right to keep at arm's length media agents who have a record of distorting facts to fit preconceived notions of high drama. Journalists and their organizations have unforgiving memories for those who put out misleading or dishonest information, and corporate public relations departments practice a similar form of "redlining." One of the favorite topics when people from those departments gather for a friendly drink is "what to do when Mike Wallace calls."

Should corporations and the "others" resort to end runs around the media to get their stories out? Mobil and Illinois Power suggest varieties of end runs: one through advocacy advertising, and the other through countervideo. In 1978 the Supreme Court, in a 5–4 decision, validated the right of the First National Bank of Boston to advertise in opposition to an income tax referendum in Massachusetts (*First National Bank* v. *Belotti*). In some quarters this and other related court decisions were perceived as unleashing the mighty economic power of big corporations to influence public opinion unfairly. In fact, in writing for the minority, Justice Byron White saw the majority opinion as opening the door to corporate domination of "not only the economy, but also the very heart of our democracy, the electoral process." But Justice Lewis Powell, Jr., for the majority, said, "The inherent worth of the speech in terms of its capacity for informing the public does not depend upon the identity of its source, whether corporation, association, union or individual." And Chief Justice Warren Burger, in a separate opinion, added that "media conglomerates" pose "a much more realistic threat to valid [political] interests" than other corporations.

In the context of my argument, the issue is one not of unleashing corporate power but rather of prodding media power to think in broader social terms. In a newsocracy, the media's implicit role is to translate the values of our conventional morality—what we really want for ourselves and our world—to the institutions that make it operate. Those institutions, in turn, must be heard and understood before judgment is passed. Conceivably, such media power could lead toward "disaster" if it adheres to a Nielsen-rating value system. Conceivably, though—and I prefer this view—it could prompt a higher order of intellectual performance from all components of the society, and especially from the professionals who tell us every day in every way what our world means. Ultimately it might even help a confused society to define its values more clearly. □

THE LAUGHTER OF WOMEN

by Peter Davison

When men go out for laughs, they go all out,
baring their teeth, betraying no memory
of the slave quarters, master's rumpled bed,
heaps of hacked corpses at the river crossing,
bodies bent back in alleyways or gardens.
Men's voices rise and sharpen nasally
to slice their brothers even off at the knees,
ho-hoing at the gallons of booze, the babes
the other put away the night before.
"Hey, Roy, better shut your eyes
before you bleed to death."

The laughter of women keeps our distances,
whether the giggles of girls who leer askance
with respect for the bulky strut of an athlete,
or the hushed laughter of a fiancée
who feels a stranger's eyes upon her breasts,
or the *ha-ha* of a zarzuela dancer
(hand on one hip, flower in her teeth,
wrist flung overhead like a whiplash).
Laughter gives women some protection
by telling men how safe their secret is.

"We know your power," men hear the laughter say.
"We women bathed and dressed you, yet we bend
to the sway of your sex. Every woman knows
how quickly love is poisoned to erode,
yet women trust you to come implanting life.
To make light of man's yoke—that costly burden—
we carry you within us and upon us
and laugh at the dark unless it pulls us down."

The laughter of a woman is her pride.
Men smile and shake their heads to think of it,
how gladly women wear our rings, our houses.
The heads of women lean together, laughing.

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CLEAVING

An Atlantic "First"
by Michael Cunningham

When we fell in love, Jeremy bought me an earring, a four-point diamond stud. He wanted one for himself, too, but couldn't have his ear pierced. Because the practice. Because the wife. Because the kid. Six months later, when he got rid of me, we went to his tailor and had me fitted for a suit, tattersall, a good deal like his own favorite three-piece. So I was initiated, and so released.

I bracket the affair with Jeremy's gifts to make him look bad. In fact, he is nothing so simple as bad. The wife, after all, is a warm, dark-blonde woman named Francine, a published poet, and the kid a pale blond, seven in August, whose miniature Adidas, left in the back seat of Jeremy's car, gave me my first hint of what Jeremy stood to lose.

He bought me the suit because I was going to Cincinnati, and I was going to Cincinnati to find my own son. I had never seen the boy, but knew he *was* a boy, aged twelve, and that his mother's name still appeared in the Cincinnati directory. My going there started as a grandstand gesture. I'd already cut the alligator insignia from my shirt and mailed it to Jeremy in an envelope, but he didn't get the point. The following day, he asked me, over lunch, what I intended to do next. I'd sworn I wouldn't live in San Francisco without him, and he knew of my contention that, after San Francisco, there was no place farther to go. I plunked two sugars into my coffee and said, natural as day, "I think I'll go to Cincinnati and try to find my son."

He considered that a fine idea. Now the machinery of healing could be brought into play: we could go up Sutter Street to his men's store, with its plaid carpeting and deer heads, and get a tailor with a mouthful of pins to mark a broken chalk line where my new cuffs ought to fall. Here was affirmative action: a suit for Cincinnati, because I owned no suits. And I accepted it. I never thought not to accept anything Jeremy dispensed, though I did balk at the proffered airplane ticket. Golf pros made *some* money; I could buy my own.

So I took my own flight, in his tattersall and earring. I had the address in Cincinnati, and a couple of photographs: the mother, fourteen years ago, in a Kodacolor prom dress, holding the great cauliflower of a wristlet I had bought her, and the mother again, slick and shiny at the public swimming pool, with the baby already started under her taut, oiled belly. She wrote me a few times, after her parents moved her to Cincinnati, so I knew the baby was healthy, and male, and that she was able to provide for him. Then the letters stopped. I let them stop, because I was only eighteen, and willing to believe that accidents of birth were not my responsibility. Now I would find the boy, and tell him—what? That I was his father, and hit golf balls for a living, and loved him. Or would learn to love him, if I could just get a *look* at him. Or something.

My motel room in Cincinnati was all done up in twos: two beds, two orange swivel chairs, two wrapped drinking glasses on the bathroom sink. I called the room clerk, who assured me that all their single rooms

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had two beds in them. I lay on the more northern of my beds, letting the room darken around me, and while there was still a thread of light in the sky I called Jeremy, which I had promised not to do. He must have suspected I'd do it, because he answered after the first ring.

"Hello?"

"Hello, Jeremy."

"Hello, Bobby."

"I promised I wouldn't call, didn't I?"

"Yes, you did."

"I'm sorry. I won't do it again. Is Francine there?"

"Yes, she's here. We were making dinner."

During the half-second's pause, I could picture Francine's mimed "Who?" from the kitchen, Jeremy's rolled eyes and suffering, puckered mouth, his sign for "tiresome caller."

"Give her my regards," I said. Francine and I had met, and even liked each other. We'd talked, all three of us, over cognac, about the best arrangement for Jeremy. That was probably what unraveled him—he had never suspected that his wife might forgive, and offer reinstatement.

"I will," he said. "Are you all right?"

"Yes, I'm all right. I just feel perfectly stupid sitting alone in this motel room. I just wanted to hear your voice."

"Well, this is my voice."

"It's good to hear it."

"Bobby, this can't continue."

"I know it can't. I'm not trying to be a pest."

"And I'm not trying to be an ogre. But if we let this drag on, it'll cause everybody unnecessary pain."

"Unnecessary pain" was a favorite phrase of his. When we were together, I had found the line comforting, delivered with its doctor's finality: *unnecessary*, as though medical science had discovered that most hurts were easily avoidable, and would soon make public the required steps.

"I thought I'd go to Christina's house tomorrow morning," I said. "I'm going to just *go* instead of calling. If I call, I'm afraid she'll hang up on me."

"I doubt she'd hang up on you."

"Still. What am I doing here, Jeremy?"

"Are you speaking philosophically?"

"No. Prosaically. Why do you suppose I ever wanted to find my son? What do I expect to get out of it?"

"It's something to do, Bobby."

He had a point there. It was something, and I was doing it. I loved Jeremy's way of dispatching an issue by slicing straight to its stupid heart. Truly, I did. He could heal by simplification, by relieving you of your hidden motives. The lump that had worried you was proclaimed a cyst, not cancer, and your cigar only a cigar, shaped the way it was for the conduction of smoke.

"Yes," I said. "It is something. Listen, you still love me, right?"

"Come on, Bobby."

"I know you do. Just say it. Francine doesn't have to hear. Just say 'yes,' very detachedly, as if you were agreeing to lunch a week from Thursday."

"Why are you putting us both through this?"

"I'm sorry. I'm truly sorry. But I have to get through a whole night in an orange motel room. Would you just say 'yes'?"

"Goodbye, Bobby."

"One syllable. Three letters."

"Good luck finding your boy."

The line clicked off. When Jeremy first told me he was leaving his wife, I had automatically pictured an ordinary little apartment, silent dinners, midnight brawls—a situation worth divorcing. I had introduced myself to him in a bar, because I thought he was beautiful, and because he wore the same shirt I did: white, with that grinning alligator stitched at the breast like a club emblem. Fraternity members. Then the facts began to mount: Jeremy's staff position in pediatrics; his offhand purchase, one Saturday, of matching moss-green cashmere sweaters, one for each of us; a picture of Francine, radiant in simple black, so unlike the straw wife I'd imagined that I misunderstood, thought somehow for weeks after seeing it that the woman in the photo was his famous sister, an immunologist at Johns Hopkins.

Jeremy went, I suppose, through the same winnowing process with me. My dark apartment, the desiccated apple core he found under the nightstand, the cat pan I forgot to empty. The month his birthday fell, he told me he was six months younger than I was. I took it as an accusation. I asked him to leave my apartment, and he did.

The television in my motel room cost twenty-five cents per half-hour, and I had only one quarter. But I wanted evidence of other lives. Nothing much was on. An old movie, which I watched for several minutes, until I realized that every leading actor in it was now dead; then a talk show, with an aging singer who discussed her new career painting scenes of animal life. I ended up with a National Geographic special on bats. Insect-eating bats, fruit bats, vampire bats. Close-ups of their furrowed, leering faces. The quarter ran out before the show was over—a

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bat had spread its wings for flight, transforming itself with the shocking abruptness of an umbrella opening, and then the screen fizzled and sighed, reducing the bat, at takeoff, to a gray pinpoint of light.

I thought of going out to a bar. There had to be bars in Cincinnati; it was just a matter of finding one. But a congress of strangers doesn't thrill me the way it once did. When I was younger, I could read the air in a bar. Invisible particles surrounded me, quivering, charged by the contact of single-purposed bodies, and I knew right away if it was good air or bad. It registered my presence. I further excited the molecules. Now that I am older, though, I no longer cause a stir, and the air in bars has lost its effervescence.

So I stayed in the motel room all night, trying to sleep, and did what my analyst once told me to do: concentrated on a soothing image, preferably nonhuman. A good square hit down the seventh fairway, the *plock* and resonance of a wood shot, and the ball, luminous, lifting to the top of its arc and going that unaccountable few feet higher, resisting for a quarter-second the demands of gravity, then falling, graceful as a shot duck, down to the broad, unvariegated green.

In the morning, I got directions to Christina's address from the room clerk. Her house was across town, across the river. Cincinnati is like most cities, remarkable for the fact that it could be anywhere. As I drove across it, in my rented Buick, only the names of supermarkets registered a regional difference: A & P, Eagle, and Kroger instead of Safeway, Vons, and Ralphs. The markets weren't open yet, and their empty parking lots, wet with last night's rain, brokenly mirrored the low white sky.

Shopping centers dwindled into neighborhoods, and I stopped, periodically, for gaggles of schoolchildren crossing the street. One boy, walking with another, had my nose and my slope of shoulder; I watched him so hard that he felt it and looked over at me. I imagined what he saw, a small-eyed, suited man behind the windshield of an enormous mulberry-colored car. He smiled, almost coquettishly, and ran off, punching his friend's arm for emphasis. Apparently, he had been taught to avoid strange men, which I thought was a good idea. I watched him, running with his companion across the lurid green of the school yard, until a horn sounded behind me.

Christina's house lay in an elderly section, across from a spike-fenced cemetery. The house was sheathed in brick-pattern tarpaper, and a tire, painted white, encircled a clump of marigolds on the front lawn. My first conversation with Christina, when we were both eleven, had involved marigolds. She, newly moved to the neighborhood, stood on her front lawn and informed me, gravely, that the lines of yellow blossoms bordering the property were intended to repel snails. Her mother had eyed me suspiciously from the porch, and I read a message, directed at me, in the flowers. Seeing them now, twenty years later, still excited a ticklish, vaguely erotic fear. I parked the car, waited for several minutes, then crossed the lawn and mounted the porch steps. On the porch was an old brown sofa, the color of a cattail, with a wad of gray stuffing bursting out of one arm. I knocked at the screen door, which buzzed like an insect.

A middle-aged woman with a broad, blank face opened the inner door. I thought, for an oblique moment, that it was Christina, impossibly aged. "Hello," the woman said, warily.

"Hello. Does Christina Radley live here?"

"Yes, she does."

"Is she in now?"

"Well yes, she is." The woman glanced nervously backward, into the dusky house, as if she had Christina hidden somewhere.

"May I speak to her? I'm an old friend."

"Wait here a minute and I'll get her." She hesitated, then latched the screen door and went up the stairs. I could see the house, dimly, through the screen: a hallway with smoky-looking wallpaper, covered in flat pink bows, and beyond that a living room, in which half a chair was visible, with a doily draped over its back. I suspected she had done something with the boy, put him up for adoption or left him for her parents to raise. This house obviously hadn't had a child in it for years.

Christina came down the stairs, working a button on her sleeve. When she saw me, halfway down, she stopped, paused, then continued walking. She came and stood some distance from the screen door.

"Yes?" she said.

She had aged. She wore a girlish, tangerine-colored blouse, open several buttons down, and the vee of exposed flesh below her throat had taken on that matte quality. People's skin ceases to give off light as it grows older.

"Hi, Christina," I said. "Do you remember me?"

"No, I don't believe I do."

"It's Bobby Ludlow. Remember?"

She returned her attention to the buttons on her sleeve. "I knew it was you," she said, watching the sleeve, "the moment I saw you."

"I haven't changed?" I said.

"Oh, yes. You've changed terribly. But I still knew. Right that moment."

"May I come in?"

"Why are you here?"

"May I please come in?"

"Mark's at school. Is that why you've come, about Mark?"

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His name was Mark, and he still lived there. "I'm not here to cause any trouble," I said. "What are you so suspicious for?"

She looked up from the buttons. "Oh, pardon *me*. It's just a little abrupt, that's all."

"I know it's abrupt. I'm sorry. Look, I just want to see Mark, all right? Just see him."

"He's in school."

"Well, when he gets out."

"I don't think that's a good idea."

"We wouldn't have to tell him who I am. I could be an old friend who dropped into town."

"If you'll excuse me," she said, "I'm late for work."

"What do you do?"

"I'm a secretary."

"I'm a golf pro."

"Still?"

"I've done a lot of things in between. Do I look like Mark?"

"No. Look, I don't want you to disrupt his life. Or mine. Do you understand that? I hate to be cruel, but I'm trying to protect my son. He doesn't know about you."

"What did you tell him?"

"Nothing. That you were dead."

"Did you use me? I mean, like, Bobby Ludlow? Or did you make up a fictitious father?"

"I used you. With some improvisations. Will you pardon me, please?"

She closed the door. I noticed, for the first time, that what I'd taken for a door knocker was in fact a brass crucifix, nailed up on the door like a charm against evil spirits. When we were teenagers, there was a large Madonna in Christina's parents' bedroom, sculpted of some glittery white stone, a chalklike material flecked with mica. It sparkled like the floor of a subway station. Christina had confessed to me that, when she was little, she would sneak into her parents' room and surreptitiously touch her tongue to the Madonna. There was something, she'd said, very appetizing about that stone. She swore it fizzed when she licked it. As she got older, the memory worried her. She had talked vaguely about possession by devil's agents, and how children were open receivers.

It was twenty minutes before she came back out the door, wearing a tweed jacket nipped in at the waist. "You're still here," she said.

"Yes. I'm still here."

"I wish you weren't. I wish you had gone."

"I didn't."

"Obviously. Will you go?"

"Let's have a cup of coffee somewhere. Do you have time before work?"

"No. I'm late already."

"Then let me meet you on your break. I just want to hear about Mark. All right?"

"All right. All right all right all right. I get a fifteen-minute break at ten-thirty. I'll see you for fifteen minutes."

"Terrific. Where do I meet you?"

"I'll write it down." She took a pen and note pad from her bag, and clicked the pen with a jabbing motion, a sharp turn of the wrist like what a magician might use in snapping a bouquet of paper flowers out of his sleeve. I imagined she must be a formidable secretary.

"Here," she said, handing the slip of paper to me. "Do you think you can find this?"

She had written down the name of a coffee shop, with a street address. "I'll find it," I said.

"Okay. I'll see you there at ten-thirty. And don't be even five minutes late. I've only got that one little quarter-hour."

I nodded. She descended the porch steps and walked to the street with a clipped, unswaying walk intended only for travel. Watching her, I tried to imagine us married. We had talked about it, nights in San Bernardino, when we went up into the hills behind our neighborhood and spread a blanket on whatever open ground we could find among the sage and dwarf pines. The wind blew in off the Mojave, carrying with it the spiced, dusty smell of the hills and something else, a sharp undercurrent like wet fur, that seemed to rise up out of the desert which lay to our backs, on the other side of the scrubby mountains. We always faced forward, or what we considered forward, toward the lights of town, and fingered each other with deliberate joy. Christina would speculate on the idea of having forever to do it, a life's worth of permissioned beds. I felt the future as an ache, a physical hunger that no single food could possibly satisfy. Something in the remotest lights, the speckled shimmer of Los Angeles proper, tightened the skin on the back of my neck, and made my mouth ticklish with desire.

Here, in Cincinnati, Christina got into a compact car and drove off to work without glancing at me. I sat on her porch for nearly half an hour. Then I went and found a pay phone in a shopping center.

"Moffatt General."

"Pediatrics, please."

"Just a moment and I'll connect you."

There was the whir and sprocket of connections being made. "Pediatrics," a woman said.

"May I speak to Dr. Bruns, please?"

"I don't know if he's in yet. May I ask who's calling?"

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"This is Benton LaSalle. I'm calling about my daughter, Harriet." Harriet LaSalle was a patient of Jeremy's. I hoped she didn't happen to be in his office that morning.

"Could you tell me the nature of the trouble, Mr. LaSalle?"

"She's got the damn lumps again is the nature of the trouble. They're enormous this time. Would you please call Dr. Bruns to the phone immediately?"

"I'll see if he's in."

The phone went dead, and I had a peculiar moment of panic. There I was, at a pay phone in front of an A & P in Cincinnati. I felt trapped in the moment, sealed into it, with no logical next move. If Jeremy didn't pick up the line, if the nurse simply left me on hold, I couldn't imagine making the decision to hang up. I'd stand in Jeremy's suit, on hold, with no obvious next thing to do.

"Dr. Bruns."

"Hello, Jeremy."

"Hello, Bobby."

"Did you know it was me?"

"I suspected. Benton and Harriet LaSalle are in Europe this month."

"But you answered anyway."

"I thought they might have gotten back."

"Listen, I found Christina. I've just been speaking to her."

"That's good. I can't talk now."

"I just wanted to tell you. My son's name is Mark, and she doesn't want me to see him. I don't know if I should insist on seeing him or not."

"Good-bye, Bobby."

"What do you think I should do?"

"Take good care of yourself."

"All right. Listen, I wanted to tell you one other thing."

"What?"

"You're a chicken-hearted faggot, and an asshole."

He hung up. I drove to the coffee shop, which was easy to find. On the way, I took Jeremy's earring out. Rolling it between my thumb and forefinger, I considered sending it back to him, but decided not to. He had never even acknowledged receipt of my alligator. I dropped the earring into the ashtray, where it rattled each time I hit a bump. Whoever rented the car next might find it, and consider it an omen of good luck.

At the restaurant, I settled into a booth to wait for Christina. It would be an hour and a half. As I sat, drinking coffee, I watched people out on the street. There weren't many children at this time of day, though I saw a couple of boys who might have been Mark. Christina said he didn't look like me, so any twelve-year-old boy could have been mine. I saw one in particular, walking alone, with a gait like Christina's, that same chin-out posture, which implied that air was a semi-solid medium, and required slicing. The fact that this could possibly be my son gave me a minute entry into his mind and body: as he occupied the three consecutive plate-glass windows of the coffee shop, I could feel the cap riding, uncertainly, on his head, and the pat of the asphalt under his tennis shoes. There was a tiny piercingness in me, the sense of a compact, well-oiled body moving along a familiar sidewalk, cut cleanly by the wind. I swore I could make out where he was going, the gray image of a bedroom plastered with girlie pictures, furry as bad television reception, the sort of vision I suspected psychics must have. Then the boy passed beyond the windows, and I returned to myself, saw my own hands around my coffee cup, and felt a shock of non-recognition. A feeling like arriving, back from a week's vacation, to find your house ineffably changed, the property of someone who isn't quite you.

Christina arrived at ten-forty. I had been through a half-dozen cups of coffee by then, having had to pour the last few myself, since the waitress avoided me. I didn't blame her. There is something suspicious about a man in a suit with nothing better to do on a weekday morning than sit in a coffee shop for an hour and a half.

Christina sat in my booth, at the far end. "I'm glad you came," I said.

"I nearly didn't."

"Then I'd have come back to your house tonight."

"That's what I thought you'd do. So I came now."

"I think I may have seen Mark."

"Where?" she said, quickly.

"Here. I think he may have walked by about an hour ago."

"That's impossible. His school is miles from here."

"Well, I still think maybe it was him. Do you have any pictures?"

"Why have you come here?"

"I told you. I just want to see him."

"But why now? All of a sudden, after twelve years?"

"I'm getting older."

"I know. So am I."

"I probably won't have any other children."

"Mark isn't *yours*. Do you think you can just drop in after twelve years and call my child yours?"

"No. I don't think that. Couldn't I see a picture?"

"I've alerted the school. They're going to be watching him constantly, so don't think you can go down there and find him."

"I won't. Really. Just let me see what he looks like."

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For a moment she pulled into herself, a palpable drawing-away that reminded me of her at sixteen, of that ability she'd had to speak to her raging mother, sweetly and evenly, from someplace far away. "Here," she said, reaching into her purse. "I don't have anything recent. The newest of these is at least a year old."

She handed me several snapshots. They showed a blond boy with a flattened nose and small, ungenerous eyes.

"He *does* look like me," I said.

She nodded. In one of the pictures, Mark leaned proudly in a doorway, his outer hip cocked; in another, a school picture, he stared straight into the camera, lips pooched out in a burlesque kiss.

"He's very much like you," Christina said, picking something off the cuff of her blouse. The waitress came and stood silently, pencil poised over her order pad. "Nothing, thank you," Christina said. "I have to leave in a minute."

When the waitress had gone, she leaned forward and told me, "I could never believe how much he acted like you. It's like he was possessed, or something."

"Are you both doing all right?" I asked. "Do you have enough money?"

"Yes. The landlord sold the house we were living in, so we moved in with my Aunt Blanche. It was supposed to be temporary, but it's much cheaper than anything else I could find. And Blanche lets us stay on."

"Is he happy?"

"I suppose. I don't know. How can you tell that about anybody?"

"Your son—"

"He's closed up to me. Now that he's getting older, he's as closed to me as everybody else is."

"Listen," I said. "If you're having trouble, I could stay around for a while. There's nothing really pressing me back in San Francisco. I could stay around."

She moistened her lips with the tip of her tongue. "I've been all alone here," she said, hesitantly, as though she was uncertain of the fact. "I missed you for years. Now Mark's starting to talk about going away."

I touched her hand, and she pulled it back as if I'd stuck her with a pin. "I have to go," she said.

"Maybe I could stop by tonight?"

"No. *No.* If you come I'll call the police. Give me the pictures back, please."

I gave them to her, and she stood up, holding them close to her belly. "Stay away," she said. "Do you understand?"

"Yes. I understand."

"Don't you see that you can't just—" She turned and left the restaurant, clutching the pictures, slicing the air.

After she left, I went to the pay phone back by the men's room and called TWA. I asked the reservation agent if she had any seats left on a flight to San Francisco this afternoon, and she said she had. I could fly out of Cincinnati as early as two, if I liked. That would be fine, I said. After speaking to her, I considered calling Jeremy, but decided against it. Quitting him would be like quitting smoking: instead of approaching it as a life's endeavor, I would handle it cigarette by cigarette, phone call by phone call. I'd refrain from this one, and think no further into it than that.

It wasn't difficult finding out where Mark's school was. A call to the district office, with Christina's address. I drove to the building and parked in front. It was a turreted brick thing, dust-colored, with a startling cobalt-blue door. I could imagine Mark hating it, hating the gray brick and the venetian blinds and the murky-looking fish tank that stood in a lower window. Christina said he was like me. He would hate those things. The only thing he might have liked was that electric blue door, a blue that doesn't appear in nature. The color of that door would look to him like his future: drunken taxi rides through cities, kisses in alleyways, the great ragged mystery of it all. If he was like me.

School was in session, though I suspected they would get out for recess soon. I wondered if Christina really had alerted the teachers against me. It was quite possible that she had. There was an enormous elm tree just off the school grounds, between the scrap of a parking lot I sat in and the yard proper. I got out of my car and climbed the tree, which was easy enough to do. I swung from a low branch, hooking my feet onto it and pulling myself up like a sloth. The subsequent branches were like ladder rungs, unevenly spaced; in two minutes I was thirty feet off the ground, with a good view, through dying leaves, of the school yard. Jeremy's suit had gotten smudged in the ascent, its knees and elbows blackened by tree soot. I took off the jacket and hung it from a knob on a nearby limb. The air was cool, scented with the elm's charcoal musk. I raised my arms to let the air circulate under them. The idea of shedding the whole suit seemed so natural that I almost did it, without thinking. My seat on the limb was too precarious. But I could imagine myself, released, sitting up there in nothing but undershorts, black socks, and shoes. Like somebody's forgetful uncle.

Children started trickling out of the building in less than an hour. The first group was too young. They moved with the abashed orderliness of little children to a welter of slides and swing sets at the far end of the yard. Others followed after them, bigger children, who regrouped a ways from the playground equipment, into

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boy clusters and girl clusters. I was too far away, and too high up, to be able to see their faces clearly. Mark might have been among them. One blond head shone here, another there. A peculiar tightness rose in my throat, as if it were being squeezed; I loosened my tie and collar, but the squeezing persisted. Something seemed to be oozing upward in me, like toothpaste out of a tube. As I watched the boys, yammering there in the yard, verging on the girls' groups, I found that I could sense things about them. One had a mother who ate garlic to cure imaginary diseases; he intended to join the Merchant Marine, as soon as he was old enough. Another wanted to sing, practiced guitar until his fingers bled, and imagined himself discovered in a park in Chicago. Still another had had a dream last night, a sensual dream about his best friend, and planned to visit the seamstress's daughter, a dim-witted girl reputed to do anything she was asked. These messages came in garbled, like overlapping voices on a telephone wire, and only after hearing could I make sense of them. Sweat popped out along my upper lip. I shifted around to get a better view through the leaves, and wiped my mouth with the back of my hand. The tiny perceptual jabs still assaulted me: aerodynamics, stock car racing, a trumpet blast in a crowded cellar, love, love, love. Fingers intertwined, eyes, secret hair, the minnowlike darting of tongues. Some of that came from my boy, who was turning out a little like me. As if he were infected with my own particular germ. I leaned forward and out, straining to see better, and my shoulder pressed against the suit jacket, lifting it neatly off the burl on which it was hung. It dropped to the ground unhesitatingly, as though it were glad to be falling, and lay there tangled on itself, sleeves akimbo, like the body of a man only mildly surprised by his own death. A bell rang, signaling the end of recess period, calling my child, calling all my children, back inside. □

MAGICIAN
by Gary Miranda

What matters more than practice
is the fact that you, my audience,
are pulling for me, want me to pull
it off—this next sleight. Now
you see it. Something more than
whether I succeed's at stake.

This talk is called patter. This
is misdirection—how my left
hand shows you nothing's in it.
Nothing is. I count on your mistake
of caring. In my right hand your
undoing blooms like cancer.

But I've shown you that already—
empty. Most tricks are done
before you think they've started—you
who value space more than time.
The balls, the cards, the coins—they go
into the past, not into my pocket.

If I give you anything, be sure
it's not important. What I keep
keeps me alive—a truth on which
your interest hinges. We are like
lovers, if you will. Sometimes even
if you don't will. Now you don't.

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NEW ENGLAND RECAPTURED

The World of the Howes Brothers

by Richard Wilbur

The Howes brothers—Alvah, Walter, and George—were natives of Ashfield, a village in the Berkshire hills. Their father, George Howes, had a small farm and a large family (five sons and two daughters), which may explain why four of his sons eventually decided to leave home in search of a better livelihood. William found employment as a factory hand, while Alvah, Walter, and George entered the field of commercial photography, a profession that expanded rapidly after the Civil War. During their active years as professional photographers (1886–1906), the three brothers worked largely as itinerants, traveling from place to place and taking pictures of households, school classes, factory crews, shopkeepers, delivery men, and virtually anyone or anything else they could persuade to stand still long enough. More than 20,000 glass plate negatives taken and numbered by the Howes brothers survive. Valuable as social documents, rich in visual information about New England people and scenes, these photographs are also eloquent testimony to the industry and artistry of the Howes brothers themselves.

—Gerald W. McFarland

If you live in western Massachusetts, the pictures taken by the Howes brothers of Ashfield can give you a momentarily jumbled sense of time. That is because so much of the district has proved unimprovable, and looks as it did eighty or ninety years ago. It is a horse-drawn, unpaved, and largely unmechanized world that one sees, and the décor and clothing are dead giveaways. Still, if you turn off the big highways anywhere in Howes territory, and let the roads rise, twist, and narrow amid trees and stone walls, you will soon see the generic house that the brothers so frequently recorded. It is a rather stark clapboard house, perhaps with a narrow front porch and a shed and barn adjoining. You would not say that the grounds had been landscaped, though the old rock maples are beautiful. There may be a bit of litter about—a board, a barrow, an overturned tub that seems to have been there a while—and a grape arbor, very likely a garden, an orchard, stony fields. Behind all, you will see for certain the wooded hills as they always were, their dark conifer patches striated with birch, and above them a sky that knows how to be cold in season. Some social scientist tells us that 85 percent of Americans now live in city or suburb, in much

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changed or developed communities where the awareness of topography is dimmed. What would a Dallasite recognize in a picture of old Dallas? But certain pictures in the Howes archive convey to me an odd first impression of familiar vistas infiltrated by strangers.

One reason the Howeses' photography can affect you so is that it has none of the haze and chiaroscuro of memory, or history; though pointedly composed, the pictures take in everything on equal terms, and the least detail comes forward sharply. That tangle of elderberry, fox grape, and wild cherry is just down our road on the right-hand side, this minute; that sledgehammer standing on its head by a wall is the image of mine.

Another reason for the partial illusion of presentness is that the people with their period air and attire are so often subordinated to representations of structures and farmsteads, of interiors, of enterprises, of groups and group labor. I am told that the Howes brothers' advance man, going from town to town, secured commissions for the recording of family, commercial, or institutional history; when the photographer came, it was not to do impressions of the landscape or portraits of isolated heads, but to record milieus, gatherings, whole aspects of the world's work. These photographs are of a special sort, then—documentary in intention, answering the customer's desire, displaying people in the midst of their settings and undertakings. Old family albums of the time, or the products of portrait studios, would give us other glimpses of the same world; but these, I think, have something more or different to tell.

In good light, the Howes camera could take a fifth-of-a-second exposure, so that the catatonic expressions of an earlier day were not necessary. Nevertheless, it is fairly seldom that these faces, which look as a rule toward the camera, are smiling or projecting personality. Eight bundled-up men and women, about to push off for a bobsled ride, are full of gaiety and expectation; seated on his front stoop with his shoes on a city sidewalk, a solid man with a well-fed family, wearing a derby, bow tie, and watch chain, lets us know that he is an aggressive businessman; two stylish adolescent boys with knotted scarves are the only subjects, in the pictures I have sampled, who regard the lens with a sleek and amused complacency. In the lawn behind them is a hammock emblematic of leisure. Most of the photographs convey little of polish or well-to-do ease. A

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wedding party in a pasture is uniformly grave, though the bride's ducked head may be hiding a shy smile; the grandmother giving an infant its bottle is frowningly blank; dwarfed by a barnlike house at the corner of Pine Street, a family stares at us with expressionless faces. Is it diffidence we see in such cases? Stoicism? A lingering Calvinist austerity? Possibly, but I think also of what one of the Adamses said—that the pitiful thing is not to be poor, but to feel that one does not matter. Surely, to face a camera, especially a professional one, was not an everyday thing for these folk. I suspect that their seriousness has often to do with a sense that their lives for once are going on record; that, however modestly, they are entering history.

In these studies not of single selves but of interrelated lives and their properties, there is a wish to *show* as much as possible: the whole family and its homestead, with the horse and wagon on display; the grade school class putting forward the potted plants they have tended; the man who, torn between exhibiting his work and its fruits, wears a Sunday suit and hat while holding a calf on a halter; the busy barbershop seen *in toto*, from the front door clear to the shelved bottles in the back; the tobacco workers showing the process of rolling the cheesecloth after the harvest; the timber gang working together. Workers, in these pictures, are generally more at ease than those who have nothing to do but pose, though the salient thing about them is not personality but function: this is a man, you say, who is proud of his ax work; there is a fellow who can use a peavey. Perhaps the height of personal effacement is the man who has somehow managed to get a yardful of leashed dogs to hold still; the one thing blurred is his face.

Some of the descendants of the Howes brothers' subjects have doubtless enjoyed this century's mobility, its pursuit of self-fulfillment, its softer and glossier ways of living. Still, what we mostly see here is a self-respecting breed who knew how to do many things, who knew who they were, who made themselves comfortable enough, who had their recreations, were more cohesive than we, and were closer than we to a sometimes hard but always beautiful land. It is not a bad picture. □

Richard Wilbur's essay, Gerald McFarland's introduction, and the photographs are taken from a forthcoming book, *New England Reflections* edited by Alan Newman.

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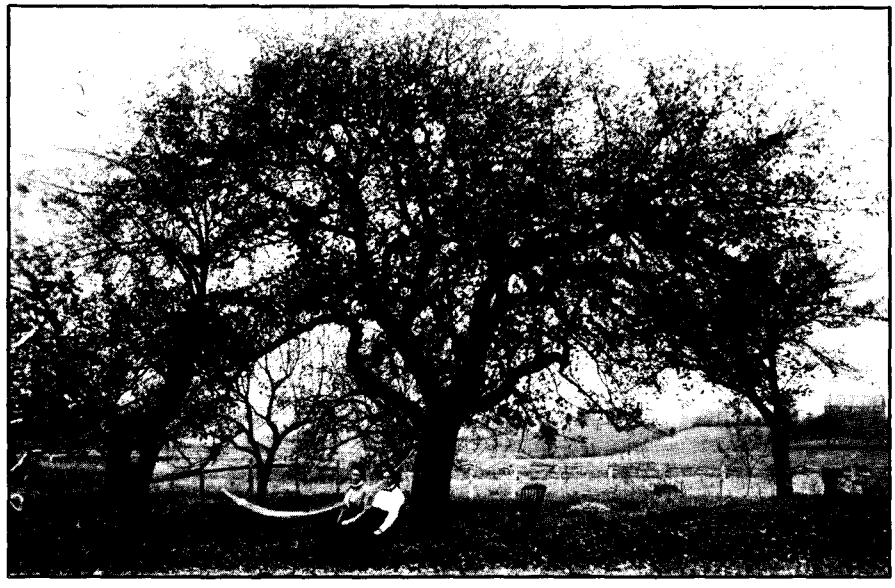

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UNDERSTANDING ISLAM

No More Holy Wars

by Harvey Cox

In search of a basis for understanding between Christians and Moslems in the volatile Middle East, one scholar finds that the two faiths are much closer in history and doctrine than we might think. The time has come for religions to recover what is common to them in a world too small for more wars, especially holy ones.

No cask without an end stave or a head
E'er gaped so wide as one shade I beheld,
Cloven from chin to where the wind is voided.
Between his legs his entrails hung in coils;
The vitals were exposed to view, and too
That sorry paunch which changes food to filth.
While I stood all absorbed in watching him
He looked at me and stretched his breast apart,
Saying: "Behold, how I split myself!
Behold, how mutilated is Mahomet!
In front of me the weeping Ali goes,
His face cleft through from forelock to chin;
And all the others that you see about
Fomenters were of discord and of schism:
And that is why they are so gashed asunder."

Dante, *Inferno*, Canto 28

Odious Western images of Muhammad and of Islam have a long and embarrassingly honorable lineage. Dante places the prophet in that circle of hell reserved for those stained by the sin he calls *seminator di scandalo e di scisma*. As a schismatic, Muhammad's fitting punishment is to be eternally chopped in half from his chin to his anus, spilling entrails and excrement at the door of Satan's stronghold. His loyal disciple Ali, whose sins of division were presumably on a lesser scale, is sliced only "from forelock to chin." There is scandal, too. A few lines later, Dante has Muhammad send a warning to a contemporary priest whose sect was said to advocate the community of goods and who was also suspected of having a mistress. The admonition cautions the errant

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padre that the same fate awaits him if he does not quickly mend his ways. Already in Dante's classic portrait, we find the image of the Moslem linked with revolting violence, distorted doctrine, a dangerous economic idea, and the tantalizing hint of illicit sensuality.

Nothing much has changed in the 600 years since. Even the current wave of interest in Eastern spirituality among many American Christians has not done much to improve the popular estimate of Islam. It is fashionable now in the West to find something of value in Buddhism or Hinduism, to peruse the *Sutras* or the *Bhagavad Gita,* to attend a lecture by Swami Muktananda or the Dalai Lama, even to try a little yoga or meditation. But Americans in general and Christians in particular seem unable to find much to admire in Islam. As G. H. Hansen observes, with only a modicum of hyperbole, in his book *Militant Islam*, the mental picture most Westerners hold of this faith of 750 million people is one of ". . . strange bearded men with burning eyes, hieratic figures in robes and turbans, blood dripping from the amputated hands and from the striped backs of malefactors, and piles of stones barely concealing the battered bodies of adulterous couples." Lecherous, truculent, irrational, cruel, conniving, excitable, dreaming about lascivious heavens while hypocritically enforcing oppressive legal codes: the stereotype of the Moslem is only partially softened by a Kahlil Gibran who puts it into sentimental doggerel or a Rudolph Valentino who does it with zest and good humor.

There is, of course, one important exception to the West's rejection of the religious value of Islam. This exception's most visible representatives have been Muhammad Ali and the late Malcolm X. Most Americans who seem genuinely drawn to the call of the minaret are blacks. But given the racial myopia that continues to affect almost all American cultural perceptions, this exception has probably deepened the distrust most white Christians feel toward Islam. The dominant image was summed up brilliantly in a Boston newspaper's cartoon showing a Moslem seated in prayer. Over his head the balloon contained one word: "Hate!"

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This captious caricaturing of Moslems and Arabs is not confined to the popular mentality. In his *Orientalism,* Edward Said describes a study published in 1975 of Arabs in American textbooks that demonstrates how prejudices continue to be spread through respectable sources. One textbook, for example, sums up Islam in the following manner:

> The Moslem religion, called Islam, began in the seventh century. It was started by a wealthy businessman of Arabia, called Muhammad. He claimed that he was a prophet. He found followers among the other Arabs. He told them they were picked to rule the world.

This passage is, unfortunately, not atypical. Although phrased with some degree of restraint, it coheres all too well with the popular medieval picture of Muhammad as a sly trickster or the current comic-book depictions of the sated, power-mad Arab. Moreover, Dante's unflattering portrait of the prophet was rooted in traditions that existed long before his time. These primal shadowgraphs have notoriously long half-lives, and they continue to darken our capacity to understand Islam to this day.

Allah works in mysterious ways. Through the stubborn geopolitics of oil, Westerners are being forced, like it or not, to learn more about Islam than they ever thought they would. Inevitably this reappraisal has begun to include a rethinking of the relationship between Islam and Christianity. In the fall of 1979, the World Council of Churches sponsored a conference on the subject in Kenya, and Christian scholars with direct experience of Islam were invited from all over the world. The results were mixed since, ironically, theologians from countries where Islam is a small minority seemed much more eager to enter into dialogue with their Moslem counterparts than did those from countries where Christians form a small minority in an Islamic world. Still, the recent upsurge of Islamic visibility will surely increase enrollments in courses on Islam wherever they are offered, and sales of books on the subject are up.

All such activities are welcome. But what about the shadowgraphs? Conferences and courses will help only if their participants become aware of the deeply-lying, nearly archetypal images that subvert the whole enterprise from the outset. Along with study and analysis, a kind of cultural archaeology or even a collective psychoanalysis may be necessary if we are to leave Dante's Inferno behind and live in peace with our Moslem neighbors on the planet Earth. The question is, How can Westerners, and Christians in particular, begin to cut through the maze of distorting mirrors and prepare the ground for some genuine encounter with Moslems?

The first thing we probably need to recognize is that the principal source of the acrimony underlying the Christian–Moslem relationship is a historical equivalent of sibling rivalry. Christians somehow hate to admit that in many ways their faith stands closer to Islam than to any other world religion. Indeed, that may be the reason Muhammad was viewed for centuries in the West as a charlatan and an imposter. The truth is, theologically speaking at least, both faiths are the offspring of an earlier revelation through the Law and the Prophets to the people of Israel. Both honor the Virgin Mary and Jesus of Nazareth. Both received an enormous early impetus from an apostle—Paul for Christianity and Muhammad for Islam—who translated a particularistic vision into a universal faith. The word "Allah" (used in the core formula of Islam: "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet") is not an exclusively Moslem term at all. It is merely the Arabic word for God, and is used by Arabic Christians when they refer to the God of Christian faith.

There is nothing terribly surprising about these similarities since Muhammad, whose preaching mission did not begin until he reached forty, was subjected to considerable influence from Christianity during his formative years and may have come close—according to some scholars—to becoming an Abyssinian Christian. As Arend van Leeuwen points out in his thoughtful treatment of Islam in *Christianity in World History*, "The truth is that when Islam was still in the initial stages of its development, there was nothing likely to prevent the new movement from being accepted as a peculiar version of Arabian Christianity." Maybe the traditional Christian uneasiness with Islam is that it seems just a little *too* similar. We sense the same aversion we might feel toward a twin brother who looks more like us than we want him to and whose habits remind us of some of the things we like least in ourselves.

The metaphor of a brother, or perhaps a cousin, is entirely germane. Muhammad considered himself to be in a direct line with the great biblical prophets and with Jesus. The title he preferred for himself was *al-nabi al-ummi*, the "prophet of the nations" (or of the "gentiles"). He believed he was living proof that the God who had called and used previous prophets such as Abraham and Job, neither of whom was Jewish, could do the same thing again. Later on, Moslem theologians liked to trace the genealogy of Muhammad back to Hagar, the bondwoman spouse of Abraham. The Old Testament story says that Hagar's giving birth to Ish-

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mael stirred up such jealousy between her and Sarah, Abraham's first wife and the mother of Isaac, that Sarah persuaded Abraham to banish the bondwoman and her child into the desert. There Hagar gave up hope and left the child under a shrub to die. But God heard the child's weeping, created a well of water in the desert to save them both, and promised Hagar that from her son also, as from Isaac, He would "create a great nation." According to the symbolism of this old saga, the Jews and the Arabs (and by extension all Moslems) are the common offspring of Abraham (called "Ibrahim" in Arabic). This makes Christians and Moslems cousins, at least by legendary lineage.

The similarity between Christians and Moslems does not stop with religious genealogy. The actual elements of the Koran's message—faith, fasting, alms, prayer, and pilgrimage—all have Christian analogues. Despite its firm refusal to recognize any divine being except God (which is the basis for its rejection of Christ's divinity), Islam appears sometimes to be a pastiche of elements from disparate forms of Christianity molded into a potent unity. Take the Calvinist emphasis on faith in an omnipotent deity, the pietistic cultivation of daily personal prayer, the medieval teaching on charity, the folk-Catholic fascination with pilgrimage, and the monastic practice of fasting, and you have all the essential ingredients of Islam. All, that is, except the confluence of forces which, through the personality of Muhammad and the movement he set off, joined these elements in the white heat of history and fused them into a coherent faith of compelling attractiveness.

Like Paul, who said his apostleship was to both Jews and gentiles, Muhammad believed his mission was twofold. He felt called by God to bring the law and the Gospel to the heretofore neglected peoples of Arabia. But he also felt he had a mission *to* those very peoples—Christians and Jews (whom he called "peoples of the book")—*from* whom the original message of salvation had come. In one important respect, therefore, Muhammad's mission was different from St. Paul's. Since Muhammad carried on his preaching in the early decades of the seventh century, he not only had to deal with a Judaism he considered corrupted (as Paul had too); he also had to face an even more corrupted form of Christianity. Fortunately for St. Paul, since the Christian movement was only a decade or so old when he lived, he had to cope only with a few legalizers and gnostics. The infant Church had not yet tasted the corruption that comes, perhaps inevitably, from power and longevity. From a certain Christian perspective, Muhammad was as much a reformer as an apostle. A prophet of the gentiles, he also saw himself as a purifier of the faith of all the "peoples of the book," Christians and Jews, calling them away from the ornate and decadent versions of the faith they had fallen into and back to its simple essence, at least as he understood it. There is always something of this urge to simplify, to return *ad fontes*, in any reformer. And Muhammad was no exception.

No one should minimize the fact that in any genuine conversation between Christians and Moslems certain real differences in theology and practice will have to be faced, what scholars often call "rival truth claims." But such conflicting assertions can be properly understood only against the flesh-and-blood history that has somehow made them rivals. Religious teachings do not inhabit a realm apart. They mean what they do to people because of the coloration given to them by long historical experience. Therefore a previous question has to be asked. It is this: If Christianity and Islam share such common roots and, despite real differences, some striking similarities, why have they grown so bitter toward each other over the centuries? Why did the average white American feel less sympathetic to Islam than to any other world religion even *before* our current flap with the ayatollahs?

The explanation for this hostility is not a pretty story. Its major lineaments can be indicated with the names of three figures who symbolize its most critical stages. The first is Alexander the Great, whose career corresponds to what might be called the prehistory of Christianity. The second is Constantine the Great, who exemplifies its early period. The third is Pope Urban II, who expresses its classical phase, one of the most formative in the Christian–Moslem interaction.

Christopher Dawson, the late Roman Catholic cultural historian, once remarked that "Muhammad is the Orient's answer to Alexander the Great." At first this sounds like one of those wonderfully sweeping but highly improbable aphorisms. Muhammad, after all, lived and preached a full thousand years after Alexander. The prodigious Macedonian disciple of Aristotle conquered everything between Greece and northern India before he was thirty-three and spread the culture and values of Hellenism wherever his soldiers trod. But a thousand years is not a long time when one is dealing with cultural domination and the backlash it ultimately elicits. This is what Dawson had in mind.

Alexander did more than conquer everything before him. Unlike previous conquerors, who sought mainly booty and tribute, he wanted to convert his colonized peoples into Hellenists. Alexander's conquest mixed military, political, and religious power. It was obviously going to require a comparable fusion of elements to throw off his conquest. After a thousand years that response finally came. It was Islam.

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As Albert Memmi writes in his classic book *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, ". . . the colonized can wait a long time to live. But, regardless of how soon or how violently the colonized rejects his situation, he will one day begin to overthrow his unlivable existence with the whole force of his oppressed personality. . . . He attempts to . . . reconquer all the dimensions which the colonization tore away from him." When the Islamic response to Roman–Hellenistic domination exploded in the early seventh century, the entire world was stunned by its vitality. In retrospect, however, we can understand its religious ideology in large measure as a reverse mirror image of what it was overthrowing. Take its rejection of the divinity of Christ, for example. Alexander had allowed himself to be viewed as a divine being, a god-emperor, and this ideology persisted through centuries of European culture in one form or another. The Koran's strenuous insistence that there was only one God, and its rejection of all semi-divine beings, must be seen at least in part as a rejection of the political use of Christology to sacralize various forms of human rule.

The Moslem rejection of the divinity of Christ is not just simpleminded monotheistic stubbornness. It began as "political theology." For the Arabians, living on what were then the outskirts of the Eastern Empire, it marked a rejection not only of the non-Semitic categories in which the doctrine of Christ's divinity were elaborated in the Church councils (the "being of one substance with the Father") but also of the political hierarchy the doctrine helped to sanctify, especially in the Byzantine environment. When the Pantocrator Christ began to sacralize an empire in which the Arabians were the underdogs, their refusal of the doctrine made perfect sense. Alexander the Great had created the cultural imperium for which Christianity eventually supplied the sacred ideology. The Islamic revolt against this system was a revolt not against the Gospel as they understood it but against what Christianity had come to be. Islam's implacable insistence on one God not only freed thousands of people from their fear of the evil jinns and united the feuding tribes of Arabia (and later a vast part of the known world); it also served as a counterideology to the political function that Christian trinitarianism was beginning to serve. No "rival truth claim" debate between Christians and Moslems can begin until this history is recognized.

Islam began as a liberation theology, but, like Christianity, which had a comparable beginning, it could not resist the wiles of worldly power. As in the case of most successful liberation movements, Islam incorporated many of the cultural and political characteristics of its enemies. Though Muhammad was hounded out of Mecca by its local power elites, one hundred years after his death a glittering capital for the new Islamic empire was founded at Baghdad, the "Constantinople of Islam." Moslems became imperialists themselves, although in most instances they allowed Christians and Jews to practice their faiths. Forced conversions were rare. Above all, Moslems became the supreme masters and cultivators of the very Greek wisdom that had been imposed on them by Alexander. They became devout disciples of the same Aristotle whose zealous pupil had set out to spread his master's learning in their lands a millennium before. It was the Arabs, after all, who brought Aristotle back to the West and eventually to the cluttered desk of Thomas Aquinas. At its height, Islamic culture vastly outshone that of the Christian West, which most Moslems more or less accurately regarded as a barren outpost. But at the same time, the original liberating impulse of Islam had begun to run out. Today, paradoxically, this very spoiling by success may provide a needed bridge between Christians and Moslems, since Christians have experienced the same sad, familiar story in their own history.

Muhammad's judgment on the Christianity of his day is one of the great ironies of history. This Christianity, which began in the life of a Palestinian Jew who was executed because he was viewed as a threat to the Roman Empire and to the Hellenistically inclined rulers of his colonized nation, was seen a few centuries later by Muhammad, the prophet of another downtrodden nation, as the religious sanction for his own people's domination. What is remarkable about Muhammad is not that he rejected current theories about the divinity of Christ but that he did *not* reject Jesus himself. Rather he tried, from his own vantage point, to bypass the caricature of the Gospel which imperial Christianity had elaborated and to reclaim the faith of a people much like his own who had once looked to Allah for justice and mercy.

Jesus, then, is another vital link between the two faiths. To this day, Jesus holds a central place in Islamic teaching and is sometimes even depicted as a kind of supreme exemplar of what is meant by "submission to God" (the meaning of the word "Islam"). In popular Islamic belief, Jesus often occupies an even more important position. Thus many Moslems believe that when the long awaited "Twelfth Iman," whose name is *al-Mahdi*, finally appears to usher in the reign of justice on earth (*not* in the sky, incidentally), he will either be accompanied by Jesus or will turn out to be the same one whose "coming in Glory" the Christian creeds confess. Obviously there is much to discuss here between these two "Jesus traditions," if the ground can be cleared of spiteful stereotypes and the sibling rivalry can be held at bay.

Both Christianity and Islam began as visions of captive peoples who yearned for deliverance and caught a

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glimpse of hope in the promise of God. The two can understand each other only when both begin to acknowledge these common roots, step out of the long shadow of Alexander the Great, and try to learn from each other what has gone so terribly wrong over the years of their common history.

Constantine the Great, Roman emperor from 313 to 337 A.D. represents the historical turning point that eventually created the second great obstacle between Christians and Moslems. The Christian movement began not only as a message of hope to a colonized nation but also as the faith of the poor and the brokenhearted. But three centuries later, when Emperor Constantine beheld the cross shining across the sun and later claimed to have won the imperial throne with the help of Jesus Christ, all that changed. Although St. Paul could write to one of his fledgling congregations that there were "not many wise, not many powerful" in their midst, and the common name for Jesus' followers in those earliest days was simply "the poor," Constantine's well-timed and canny conversion totally altered all that for good. It is impossible to understand Muhammad's view of Christianity unless one remembers that he was basing it not on the Gospel accounts but on his observation of how the Church was actually functioning in his world. By their fruits ye shall know them.

Muhammad claimed to be one of the poor, at least when he started, and he never tired of reminding his followers that he was only an illiterate camel driver. He saw his humble origins not as a disgrace but as a wondrous proof that God could raise up from the very stones children unto Abraham. The *al-ummi* with whom Muhammad identified himself has a double sense. The word means not only the "gentiles," or "people without the Law," but also the unlettered, something close to the *am-ha-aretz*, the poor "people of the land" with whom Jesus sided against the learned scribes and Pharisees. The historian H. G. Reisman says that Muhammad was "a leader of the masses against the privileged minorities of wealth and sophistication." This may also explain in part the popular Islamic belief, baffling to many Christians, that every child is a "born Moslem." With growing up and education comes sophistication and corruption. In the Koran, similar to an idea St. Paul defends in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, every person has an inborn, natural awareness of God. We all start out pious but are misled by a fallen civilization and perfidious religions. It is the task of preaching to call us back to what we were, or were intended to be, in the first place.

The Koranic vision of a simple faith by which the poor and the unlettered can withstand manipulation at the hands of the powerful and the better educated makes Christians uncomfortable today, and understandably. It is painfully reminiscent of the "Blessed are the poor" with which Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount and the subsequent "Woe to you rich" with which he made sure he was not misunderstood. The Church has never completely lost its recognition of this aspect of its history. It surfaces repeatedly in such places as Simone Weil's life-shaking discovery that Christianity is essentially a faith of the poor, or in the Latin American bishops' declaring that the Church's special responsibility is to stand with the jobless and landless. Nor has Islam, despite prodigiously rich oil sheikhs, ever completely lost this central core of its tradition either. Each faith will find it easier to appreciate the other when this special role of the *al-ummi* becomes the major rather than the minor theme of its message. In this respect, Christianity probably has more recovering to do than Islam has.

Pope Urban II, who occupied the throne of Peter from 1088 to 1099, is the third great actor in the tragedy of Christianity's cumulative falling-out with Islam. He was an energetic reformer who became Pope during a period of divisiveness in the Church; his main challenge was to bring it into some semblance of unity. Like many other rulers before him, religious and secular, Urban hit upon a surefire unifying idea. Realizing that nothing unites like an external foe, and inspired by requests from the beleaguered Christians of the East, he preached a holy war against the infidels who were even then holding the Holy Sepulchre and promised the fullest spiritual benefit to those who would take up the cross. Christians and other Americans who criticize the concept of the jihad, or holy war, and decry the taking of hostages and conversion at sword's point are right, of course. But it does not require much reading in this not-so-glorious chapter in Western Christian history to see that Moslems were neither the first nor the only guilty parties in this department. In fact, there is at least one prominent school of historical scholarship that sees the first Moslem expansion not as a jihad but as a large-scale migration similar to the one that had brought the Germanic tribes into the Roman Empire from the other direction. The concept of holy war can be found in more than one Old Testament verse. It did not originate with Islam. To many Arabs it must have seemed the only sensible response to the not entirely pacifist manner in which the Christian empire dealt with its recalcitrant provinces and with those forms of Christianity, such as Nestorianism, that the bishops deemed unacceptable.

Like all wars, holy or unholy, the Crusades produced

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their quota of atrocity stories on both sides. They also produced countless incidents of generosity and unexpected interfaith respect. The mutual admiration that developed between Richard I of England and the theologically articulate Saladin, celebrated in legend, seems to have had a factual basis. Still, it was the Crusaders and not the Saracens who boasted that when they first took Jerusalem the blood of the infidels, including wives and children, flowed through the streets as deep as the horses' stirrups. Such memories do not die easily, and it is important to recall that although Westerners would sometimes like to reduce the "wars of the cross" to tales of chivalry and late-night movie fare, for many Moslems the Crusades—Christian jihads—remain the most graphic expression of what the cross means. All the more amazing, then, that even the Ayatollah Khomeini, talking to a group of visiting American clergy on Christmas Day, 1979, could ask why, as those who worship the wounded Jesus, Americans were so incapable of understanding a wounded people such as his own. Apparently some feeling for the real meaning of the cross has survived in Islam, despite the Crusades.

If it took Muhammad a thousand years to respond to Alexander the Great, perhaps it should come as no surprise that it has taken the Islamic peoples another 900 years to respond to Pope Urban II, Peter the Hermit, and the hordes of idealists, adventurers, and thugs who in successive waves burned and pillaged their way across Europe toward the Holy Land for nearly 400 years. True, some historians hold that the Crusades might never have occurred had it not been for the previous threat of militant Islam to the West. Still, once the Crusades began, they acquired a lethal momentum of their own. Christian armies started by burning the nearest ghetto, and when their attempts to seize the Holy Sepulchre did not fully succeed, turned their cross-bedecked banners toward the pagan Baltic peoples and the Albigenses of southern France. It is an ugly history. But until the sorry story of Crusade versus jihad is faced frankly and then replaced by a more generous and conciliatory attitude, the hatred and suspicion between Christians and their Moslem cousins can only escalate.

No discussion of the relations of Moslems and Christians can proceed very far without raising the parallel question of the equally long and similarly vexed interaction of Moslems and Jews. The Jewish historian S. D. Goitein is the leading scholar in the study of what he calls the "symbiosis" between Jews and Arabs. Now at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, after having taught at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Goitein has spent a lifetime probing Moslem religious literature, the medieval Geniza (documents written in Hebrew characters but in the Arabic language), and the fascinating histories of the so-called Oriental Jewish communities—those of the Arab and Moslem worlds. His *From the Land of Sheba* is an anthology of Yemenite literature. It would be hard to find a more reliable guide to this intricate area.

Goitein believes that Islam is actually far closer to Judaism than to Christianity in its core ideas. In taking this position, he joins a debate that has been going on for years (the other side contending that the similarity with Christianity is more important). Goitein bases his case on the obvious fact that both Islam and Judaism are religions of the Holy Law, and that Moslem law is in many respects similar to the Jewish Halakah, which he calls its "older sister." Both therefore differ, at least in this respect, from Christianity, which, with its emphasis on grace, has always harbored a certain suspicion of religious law (even though Christian theologians have managed to spin out yards of it over the years).

Goitein's "sister" image of the bond between Islam and Judaism should not be surprising when one bears in mind the saying, attributed to Muhammad, "You will follow the traditions of those who preceded you span by span and cubit by cubit—so closely that you will go after them even if they creep into the hole of a lizard." This colorful advice takes on even more significance in light of the fact that there were large Jewish settlements in the city of al-Medina, the birthplace of the first Moslem community, and that the biographers of the prophet almost all agree that these communities, far from being an obstacle to the spread of Islam, were in fact wondrous evidence of Allah's merciful and providential preparation of the people for a monotheistic faith. As with Christianity, the early years of Islam seem in retrospect to have promised mostly fraternal—or in this case sororial—congeniality with Judaism. But again, the roiling history of Jewish and Islamic peoples has often turned familial ties into tribal vendettas. Must it always be so?

In his informative book *Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts Through the Ages,* Goitein does what only a seasoned scholar ever dares to do. He compresses eons of history into one volume, risks a few well-grounded generalizations, and even hazards some guesses about the future. He divides the millennia-long give-and-take between these two peoples into four periods. The first, corresponding perhaps to the Alexandrian age of the Christian–Islam story, begins before historical memory and reaches up to the sixth century A.D. and the appearance of Islam. During this early period, a critically formative one for the Jews since it saw the compilation of both the Bible and the Talmud, Goitein

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believes Jews and Arabs had quite similar social patterns and religious practices. He firmly rejects any notion of a common Semitic race, however, as a modern idea concocted from the misapplication of a term invented by a German scholar in 1781 to denote a group of related languages, not "races," or even peoples. The distinction is an important one. There are several examples of peoples who for a variety of historical reasons now speak a language spoken by other peoples with whom they have no ethnic consanguinity at all. Black Americans are a case in point. Likewise, Jews and Moslem Arabs are related, according to Goitein, but by history and tradition, not by race.

The period from, roughly, 500 A.D. to 1300 A.D. is Goitein's second one. He describes it as one of "creative symbiosis," in which early Islam developed in a largely Jewish environment. Although he agrees that Christian influences, coming especially from monastic groups, played some role in this primal period, he believes that Judaism was even more important, so much so that he is willing to say—with some reservations—that Islam appears to be "an Arab recast of Israel's religion." But the influence was not one-way, and the impact of Islam and the Arabic language on Jewish thought and the Hebrew language was, he adds, at least as considerable. Goitein also reminds his readers that although Jews experienced some legal disqualifications under Moslem rule, they almost always fared better than they did under Christian dominance.

Goitein's third period begins in about 1300, when the previously high-riding Arabs began to "fade out" of world history at the same time that the Oriental Jews began to fade out of Jewish history. During this phase, which lasted until about 1900, the Arab nations fell to various conquerors until the entire Arab world had become a colony of the modern West. Meanwhile Jewish religious and intellectual life flourished in Europe, while Jews living in the beleaguered Moslem world, though they nurtured a rich internal culture, shared the suffering and obscurity of their Moslem neighbors.

The present period in Goitein's scheme begins in about 1900 with the coincidental revival of Jewish and Arab cultural and national identities, both influenced by the growing nationalism of nineteenth-century Europe. Since Zionism was an almost exclusively European (and American) movement, however, it was perceived by Arabs and other Moslems more as a new Western intrusion into the East, a pattern going back at least to the Crusades, than as something essentially Jewish, at least at the beginning. But shortly after the founding of the State of Israel, Israelis had to cope with a kind of mirror image of this "intrusion" as Jewish immigrants from Arab countries, the "forgotten Jews" of the previous period, streamed into Israel, making it less "European" with every passing day. The paradox of this apparent double intrusion was illustrated recently when an Oriental Jewish scholar living in Israel complained to a visitor about all the remarks he heard from his European colleagues lamenting the "Levantizing" of Israel. "How," he asked, " can you 'Levantize' something that is already the Levant?" His comment underscores Goitein's thoughtful prophecy that since the future of Jewish–Moslem relations has everything to do with the relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors, Israel's internal policy toward its Oriental Jews and its Arab citizens will be of decisive importance. Whether or not this turns out to be true, remembering the roller-coaster history of Jewish–Moslem relations helps one not to become too depressed about the steep decline these relations have taken in recent decades. There have been downs before, and ups, and it is not impossible that the tiny minority of Arab-Israeli citizens who are also Christians might eventually be able to play a conciliatory role. Likewise, though it seems far-fetched today, the global Jewish community, with centuries of experience in the Christian and the Moslem worlds, might someday provide an essential bridge between these two faith traditions, both in some ways its offspring. In any case, whatever happens to facilitate the conversation that must go on among Christians, Jews, and Moslems is bound to benefit all three.

Jews may help, but in the final analysis, given the role our religions play in both our cultures, no real rapport between the Arabs and the West seems possible unless Christians and Moslems make a more serious effort to understand each other. Curiously, after being warned for years that our greatest enemies in the world were godless and atheistic, Americans are now faced with a challenge that emanates from profoundly religious sources. Although Islam has never accepted the dichotomy between religion and the civil polity that has arisen in the West, there can be little doubt that the present Islamic renaissance is not a deviation but an authentic expression of the elements that were there at its origin. So we are now told that, instead of atheists, we are dealing with "fanatics," or "Moslem fundamentalists." This language is not very helpful either.

Sometime soon a real conversation must begin. Perhaps the moment has come to set aside Dante, Urban II, and the rest; to remember instead the two children of Father Abraham, from both of whom God promised to make great nations; to recall that Jesus also cast his lot with the wounded and wronged of his time; to stop caricaturing the faith of Arabia's apostle; and to try to help both Christians and Moslems to recover what is common to them in a world that is just too small for any more wars, especially holy ones. □

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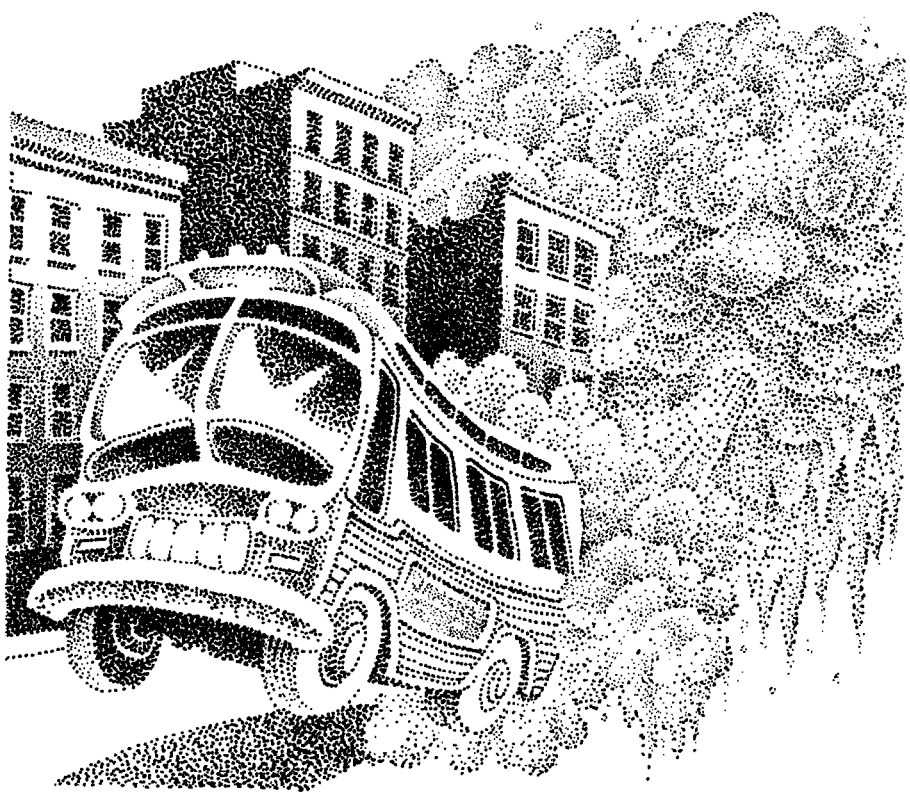
LIFE & LETTERS

WHAT JANUARY MEANS TO ME

by Robert Strozier



It is New Year's resolutions. Tentative green shoots. The dawning of the Age of Aquarius. The having no legal holidays, meaning that we can go about the important business of earning a living without fitfulness. A certain quickening of purpose and briskness of stride, symbolized by the fiery, red-headed Antonio Vivaldi (1675–1741), who composed *The Four Seasons.* The little star of eggnog on the good charcoal suit, which one hadn't noticed before, that is pretty.

January. It is the blanket on the avenue, crisp and deep and even, warmed by brother's smile and sister's kiss at the many intersections. But it is also Jack Frost's very best friend, Mr. Coldy Woldy, come in his blustery but affectionate way to pay a call. The pat that he gives the behind of the bus, hurrying it on its way. The hello-I'm-here puff that he blows into the underground arteries, invigorating the subway carriers and the people. I want to pause for just a minute and say, Thank you, January.

It is the bills of December, reminding us of the special glow that came from giving the loved ones and casual acquaintances the many things. The toys that the deeply grateful youngsters got and continue not to grow tired of. The doll of many parts that was such a bar-

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gain at $350. The cuddly puppy, found under the tree, who has still not learned the world's careful ways, who is cute.

January. It is the incredible sense of fulfillment that follows in the immediate wake of the fine Super Bowl. The interesting fact that in the original Roman calendar there was no January. The anticipation of knowing that the next month in the order will be February, which has so many facets, then the gusty March, followed by the grand April, when there is sometimes the lovely snow on Easter. The having the young adult back again, following the midterm exams, so full of the wisdom of his young years, yet much as he was when you saw him last only three weeks ago.

January. It is really a lot of things, isn't it? It is the Inauguration, held every four years, signifying that there is a process. The dome of night, securely fastened by 5:00 P.M., which is cozy. The pigeons, who resemble French hens, who seek warmth on the window ledge and bill and coo there. The new calendar, showing the beautiful scenes on the pages that turn, allowing us to look back on the growing number of them with fondness.

January. It is Grandmother, who has come over the hills and through the woods to be with us for a time. The chance encounter, in the grocery line, with someone you shared such unexpected merry measure with at the gay New Year's Eve party. The colorful carrot, fallen with dignity from the snowman onto the walkway, where one sees it. The renewed awareness, which can't be put into words, that a certain settled seemliness pervades the order of things. The milestones in the lives of those important to us that happen to fall in January, enabling us to show caring through expenditure and effort again.

January. It is, very simply, being on top of the world. It is the first, dawning realization that the tax we pay our country out of gratitude will soon be due and that the many forms have yet to be filled out so appreciatively. It is Ma in her kerchief and I in my cap, doing the emotional housecleaning that always pays such dividends. The gratifying messages that good friends have written on the roomy cast, following the minor ski mishap. The different creatures who are stirring again, now that Christmas is over. I wish I had time to go on about January. The end.

SOLVING PROBLEMS

by Henry Bromell

Robert Altman, director of *M*A*S*H* (1970), *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971), *Nashville* (1975), and, more recently, *A Wedding* (1978) and *Health* (1980), stood thoughtfully in the middle of a windowless recording studio on the Paramount lot, staring at a black-and-white projection of a scene from his new movie, *Popeye*, now in postproduction. A $20 million musical—in which Robin Williams plays the spinach-eating hero like a mime who has forgotten he's not supposed to speak and, in a splendid bit of typecasting, Altman's perennial Shelley Duvall is Olive Oyl—*Popeye* is far and away Altman's most expensive movie. Based on the famous cartoon created by E. C. Segar, *Popeye* was filmed in Anchor Bay, Malta. It took an international construction crew of 165 men four and a half months to build the set of Sweethaven, a complete village of nineteen four-sided buildings that looks, appropriately, like a realistic, detailed rendering of a child's fantasy—a wonderful, ramshackle shantytown, part folklore New England, part comic book, with steeples and balconies and teetering wooden sidewalks. After almost a year of shooting, Altman was back in Hollywood, trying to finish the movie in time for Christmas. The first sneak previews, in Seattle and St. Louis, were only a few days away.

The sound studio is part of the postproduction process. Sound recording on location is often of low quality and frequently needs to be replaced. Altman had gathered his actors to add lines, respeak lines, sing songs (by Harry Nilsson), and combine small throwaway lines to thicken the background hubbub in crowd scenes. A tall, full-bellied man in his fifties, with a gray goatee and long gray hair, Altman studied the black-and-white work print (the final movie will be color), peered through reading glasses at some notes, then signaled the sound technicians behind a long glass window that he was ready.

Affable, courteous, Altman turned to Paul Dooley, who plays the hamburger addict Wimpy in the movie. "Okay, just a few lines. Ad-lib it. You know, 'Oh, no! Oh, no! I don't want to go there!' Stuff like that. Okay, let's try it."

The lights dimmed, the room darkened. On the screen, the film started: a fantasy boat rolling on real waves, oddly dressed men and women scurrying about in larger-than-life shoes.

"Oh, no!" Dooley began on cue. "Scab Island! Oh, no! I don't want to go there! I'd gladly go on Tuesday if you take me home today!"

Patiently, three times, Altman and Dooley improvised new lines and added them to the sound track. It's a boring, repetitive process, yet it must be done carefully. The technicians sitting at their huge console, with its hundreds of mysterious buttons and switches, laughed appreciatively.

On the screen, the boat rolled and dipped again. Altman and Dooley listened as the film was played back. Dooley's new lines now seemed shouted from the portly, panicked Wimpy stumbling along the deck.

"Let's try it again," Altman said, rubbing his eyes.

Cartoons, of course, are caricatures of life, exploded, unrealistic pictures vaguely representing, or parodying, realistic narrative. Cartoons are mass culture's fairy tales and myths, portrayed in pictures for children and (originally) people who can't read. The captions, as pop artist Roy Lichtenstein realized, are strangely disassociated balloon-words hovering over idealized faces and careening airplanes, more like drugged thoughts than conversations. Altman and his screenwriter Jules Feiffer, himself a cartoonist of a satirical bent, are playing with the form much the way an earlier team of moviemakers played with *Superman*. The result is an old-fashioned, sentimental family movie that is also a wacky political satire. Camp humor is involved, along with a grown-up's thrill at seeing his childhood cartoon characters walk and talk, flesh and blood. The thrill is one of recognition and self-deprecation, a whimsical way to revive fallen heroes. Superman, after all, remains loyal to his cartoon self, defying gravity and saving the day. Even a piece of TV camp such as *Batman* had this oddly

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reassuring humor, knowing, ridiculous, and touching. Why *not* imagine ourselves this way? We did once, as children—the point being that grown-ups probably still do. We all have memories of wanting to be a hero.

Popeye is different from any previous brought-to-life cartoon, however, in that it attempts to trace the prehistory of a cartoon hero rather than simply to transpose his exploits from painted image to life image. It begins with Popeye landing at Sweethaven in a thunderstorm, much as McCabe first rides into town in a blizzard in *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*. From the start, Popeye is treated like a Martian, not only outside the social caste, which xenophobically shuns him, even bullies him, but outside the moral order of the town as well. The drama is one of an outsider becoming himself, in this case a cartoon fantasy. Sweethaven, as insulated and provincial as a medieval fiefdom, is ruled by a dictatorial force: the invisible Commodore, his all-too-visible henchman Bluto, and the Tax Man—an original Feiffer creation. Popeye, who has spent the past thirty years wandering the world in search of his long-lost "Pappy," is instinctively opposed to Bluto's brutality, yet the very people who suffer the most, the daffy, dancing citizens of Sweethaven, oppose Popeye more than they do their oppressors.

Popeye finds that the only place that will put him up is the Oyls' rooming house; there he meets the bumbling, long-limbed Olive, who is engaged, against her desire, to the villain Bluto. Sneaking away on the eve of her wedding, she bumps into Popeye standing alone on the edge of the Sweethaven dock, staring miserably out to sea. In their comical, tortured way, they flirt, confusion and pratfalls replacing the usual sighs and kisses. From the moment they discover Swee'Pea, a small "orphink" left in a basket, they are bound together as surrogate mother and father. The rest of the story, a comic-book tale interrupted by song and dance, traces Popeye and Olive's growing love, Bluto's kidnapping of Swee'Pea and Olive, and Popeye's pursuit of them all in an effort to rescue his "family"—and in the process, to liberate Sweethaven. He acts out the individualist's inherent loathing for tyranny, and in so doing learns that "I yam what I yam": a leader. Unlike McCabe, he doesn't have to die to become a leader. Instead, he becomes a cartoon.

"The biggest problem we had making *Popeye* is that we had no norm to fall back on," Altman told me over lunch. "*Quintet* was like that too. If I'm dealing with Texas or New York, I can say, 'Oh, this is the way it happens, you ride up on a horse, or you take a taxi.' But with *Popeye*, we had to create everything. I like doing that. Most of the films I've made deal with aliens. People in a strange land who don't belong there and are trying to cope. I like to tell stories about an alien wandering into a strange place. It's easier to deal with, for one thing. A contained society is easier dramatically. I don't have to deal with the real world. I need an imagined world, set apart, and then an outsider coming into it. Another problem we had with *Popeye* is that I wanted a different look. I wanted a roundness, even though the characters are two-dimensional. I wanted a tone and sense of realism, but not in a literal way, I mean not compared to something. We didn't go for diffusion, or anything to give it a sense of distance or antiquity. It's a hard kind of photography to get. I muted the colors, the town. As the film progresses, the colors become more specific, cartoony. The reds come out. The wardrobe changes. And it's more crowded at the beginning, you have a sense of a lot of people and activity. It's sparer by the end."

Altman mused a bit. "Just to give you an idea of how strange this business is, suppose I'd had the genius to invent this film, as it exists, but without the cartoon *Popeye*, without any history for it. And suppose I had somehow gotten the money together and made it, the same film. It would be the biggest failure of all time. The same picture would not work. People would be enraged. They'd be infuriated. *What is this you're trying to do to us?* That's what happened to *Quintet*. *Quintet* and *Popeye* are the same story. *Popeye* will be a success, I think, but not for the reasons that make it a good movie."

Altman was furious at Paramount because he had spent days making a trailer for *Popeye*, sent it over to the studio, and now, he said, they had changed it for the worse. "They screwed up the colors. They look awful. And the sound's bad. It's just sloppy work. If I made movies as sloppily as they've done the trailer, I'd be out of a job. They bitch so much about money and cost overruns, but I could have saved a fifth of what we've spent if the studio weren't involved. They take all the fun out of making movies."

January report on

ATLANTIC MONTHLY PRESS BOOKS

When we published **OUIDA SEBESTYEN**'s *Words by Heart* in 1979, we knew we had a special book. Reviewers and readers knew it too. They acclaimed it "remarkable," "unforgettable," "a book of stature," "many-layered," "a book to be read again and again."

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LITTLE, BROWN

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The next day, I found Altman sitting in a small basement editing room of Lion's Gate, a warehouse in Los Angeles converted by Altman into his own mini-studio, largely on the proceeds of his one and only financial hit, *M*A*S*H*. He was at the editing table with two editors, both young men, going over a scene, which they watched on a screen about the size of a TV screen. They were in the process of splicing and cutting, creating montage, putting together all the bits and pieces of film that would make, they hoped, for the best-played scene.

In the scene, Paul Dooley, the insatiable Wimpy, holds a baby in his arms—Swee'Pea. Beautiful miniature mechanical horses are running around a circular mechanical racetrack, like a toy train. Sweethavians crowd near, cheering, placing bets. Wimpy is naming the contenders, asking for Swee'Pea's advice; Swee'Pea, it turns out, is psychic. At one horse's name, Swee'Pea whistles. Ecstatic, Wimpy hurries over to the betting window, the child still in his arms. He pushes people aside.

"Okay, stop it there," Altman said. The image froze. "It's too long, don't you think?"

"It looks all right," one of the editors said.

"Yeah, it's all right, but I don't like it. Something's wrong. Too slow." They all stared mournfully at what now appeared to be a photograph on the screen.

"How about cutting it before he gets to the window?" Altman suggested. "Then just keep his voice, you know? But cut up to Bluto, and then out to Popeye on the gondola."

One of the editors suggested a rhythm: "From the bet, to the window, out to the gondola, back to the running horses, back again to the gondola, it's landed, they're all getting off, back to the track, and in comes Popeye."

"Good." Altman nodded. "That's better. Let's try it that way."

The images on the screen ran backward, stopped, started again. Altman watched, hunched forward on his seat, concentrating. His eyes were tired.

Satisfied that the cuts they had decided on would work, he led me through a maze of editing rooms up to his office. "The whole process of making movies is continually solving problems. From the day you conceive an idea to the day you finish a picture, your job is solving problems. This scene doesn't work. Solve the problem. Lunch didn't show up. Solve the problem. The actor broke his toe. Solve the problem."

We reached his office, a long white room with posters of his various movies framed and hanging on the walls. His large desk was cluttered with papers, a copy of a Max Frisch novel, small gold and bronze statuettes—some of the prizes he has won over the years.

"I never sat down and said I wanted my own company. Lion's Gate grew as a mistake. It came out of self-defense. I want to hold good people, and that's hard. It often takes me longer to finish a film than the time I can normally get from a good cameraman or a good editor. So the idea of producing other people's films and keeping a consistency going here is that there are certain people that I can keep on a regular employment basis. Also, between times, they'll go out and make a commercial or take a vacation, and then come back when I need them. Because we treat them well. The editing rooms, the dubbing stage, the hardware, all that came over a ten-year period so that we don't have to go into the studios and deal with them on their terms. Or so that I can get up in the middle of the night and make a change. It's like having a laboratory, or a shop. But someone has to support it. It's too expensive for me to have as a toy. So we have to exercise control. We have to keep a cash flow going. I'm worried that pretty soon we'll become the thing we set out to combat. Our only hope is to keep it a small operation and not let ourselves get tempted by greed. If I could make a contract with God or the devil or the government that let me keep going this way and never have a profit, I'd do it in a minute. You see, the main problem is the studio people just don't care about quality."

Altman played with a pen on his desk and gazed out the window, down into the alley. "I think that if I'd done *M*A*S*H* when I was thirty-two, I'd be a hack today. I think if I'd gotten that much adulation I would have become very cocky. Because I'm not fast. I'm not really smart. My computer takes in just what's right there in front of me. But I was forty-four when I directed *M*A*S*H*. Up until that time, I was very happy in my failure. I mean, I directed a lot of television, things like *Bonanza* and *Combat*, and I liked it. It was a good job. I made pretty good money. I had a good time. And I turned down a lot of films because I told myself if I'm going to make a film and I make a bad film then that's going to be the last one. The peer admiration that I always looked for was on *quality*. I played football in high school, and the game I remember the best is the one where the quarterback got hurt and I had to run all the plays. I mean, I nearly got killed. My dad was there watching. We got beaten something like sixty-five to nothing. But I was heroic." Altman grinned. "Even though we lost so badly, I never gave up. You don't always know when things like this happen in your life, but something comes along and causes you to say to yourself, 'I'll get mine this way rather than that way.'"

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ELVIS ONE MORE TIME

by Benjamin DeMott

Pop-star memorials—book-length, coated-paper salutes to Marilyn, Gable, or whomever—are, more often than not, toys for dolts. A leer, a tear, a whisper of buried scandal, a hint of *frisson*—these are the basic materials, and redeeming social value is minimal. Now and then, though, a memorial volume breaks out of mindlessness and invites serious response. WHEN ELVIS DIED (Communications Press, $13.95) by Neal and Janice Gregory—a study of public reaction to the death of Elvis Presley—is such a work, and I found much of it provocative.

The book opens with a series of chapters describing the hectic onset of awareness in the media that Presley's death was indeed a sensationally big story. (The authors' research persuaded them that it was the fans who, by jamming switchboards with calls for information, shocked the media into action, ultimately dictating continuous "feature feeds" by the wire services, ragged TV specials, convulsive searches of newspaper back files for reports of the performer's local appearances, and on-the-spot coverage by broadcasters and papers unaccustomed to sending staffers out of town, but perfectly prepared to profit from the popular will.) Next comes an account of the pre-funeral spectacle at Graceland, Presley's Memphis home—thousands of mourners and hundreds of reporters keeping an around-the-clock vigil marked by grotesque outbursts of grief and dementia (at one point in the predawn hours, a desperately drunken man drove his car into the crowd, killing two of the bereaved). The narrative interrupts itself, after a report on the funeral, to survey Presley's life, the emphasis being upon class background and musical influences. Then come separate chapters about the White House response to the event, the international reaction, and subsequent efforts—pious, commercial, or both—to keep Presley's flame alive. The book ends with an epilogue discussing the performer's drug usage and the present state of his reputation; the final sentences affirm that Elvis Presley "symbolized the ultimate rebellion of all common folk against all forms of restraint."

A husband-and-wife writing team, Neal and Janice Gregory have served as advisers to Public Broadcasting System ventures (notably a documentary about William Faulkner), but they don't put themselves forward as intellectuals or pop-cultural theorists. Both earn their living in Washington as congressional committee staff members. Their goal is simply to tell their readers everything that can be told about what happened upon "the Passing of an American King." Toward that end they interviewed scores of reporters and editors who either covered Presley's funeral or made decisions about how to play the story. (The interviews focus on the reporters' motives and self-perceptions while on the job.) And they surveyed U.S. editorial comment on the death and funeral, convinced that this body of writing says something about who we think we are. Sixty-plus editorials struck the Gregorys as worth high marks; they are reprinted in an appendix.

It's a comprehensive chronicle, in a word, and its usefulness is directly traceable to the fullness. So too, as might be guessed, are the book's defects. You can't tell whole stories about media events nowadays without mounding up a quantity of dreck—fast-fact fit only for the *Guinness Book of World Records*. The Gregorys let fall that Elvis Presley's funeral provided the florists of America with their biggest day in history; that when a Maine hotel where the singer once slept auctioned off for charity the furnishings of his room, the pillowcase brought $225; that more than a million people visited the singer's tomb in the first month after he died. They're also soft on media horror stories—predictable anecdotes about reporters posing as funeral-home and morgue employees, reporters stationing themselves on the front porches of the departed's relatives or girlfriends and interrogating them upon their return from the funeral, reporters bribing insiders for details or photos. We learn that the *National Enquirer* paid somebody $75,000 for a photo of Elvis Presley in his casket, which was run as a cover picture; the paper's representative declined a chance to buy "the sheets off the ambulance stretcher" that bore the dying man into the hospital.

The anecdotal promiscuity sometimes provides amusement, to be sure. I chuckled at the snippets of unconscious black comedy that kept turning up in the interviews. The southern lady who shamed Tupelo, Mississippi, Presley's birthplace, into building a memorial chapel on a fifteen-acre site declared that "We [felt] that on fifteen acres you couldn't do a memorial without including God." In a chapter called "The Special Case of Britain," there are several charming "this England"-style tales. "Sir," wrote a Hampstead schoolteacher to the London *Times*, chiding the paper for its indifference to Presley's gifts: "In 1956, the year when Elvis Presley's extraordinary talent burst upon the world, I started to teach in a large mixed comprehensive school in northwest London. I shall never forget the elderly senior mistress coming into the staff room one morning and saying sternly, 'I must speak to a boy called Elvis Presley because he has carved his name on every desk in the school.'" And in the Gregorys' summaries of their conversations with inhabitants of the corridors of communications power, I came upon a number of piquant if incidental details. An attractively frank Roger Mudd explains why he didn't push his masters harder to accede to his desire to open the *CBS Evening News* with the story of Elvis Presley's death. (". . . we got this very strenuous opposition . . . [and] you don't like to force your way through somebody. . . . As a substitute [for Walter Cronkite] myself, I didn't want to call in a preemptive strike and make it difficult for the rest of the summer.") A presidential speechwriter talks about producing a statement on Presley's death—the finished document leaned heavily on a splendid essay by Greil Marcus, and praised the singer for expressing "the vitality, rebelliousness, and good humor of his country"—and provides a glimpse of President Carter carefully line-editing the message, deleting "emotional rhetoric" from the text.

But these are, of course, marginal, minor pleasures. What's strongest about *When Elvis Died* as a media inquiry is its examination of reporters' changing emotions while on the assignment—their movement from repugnance at the mourners' vulgarity to a

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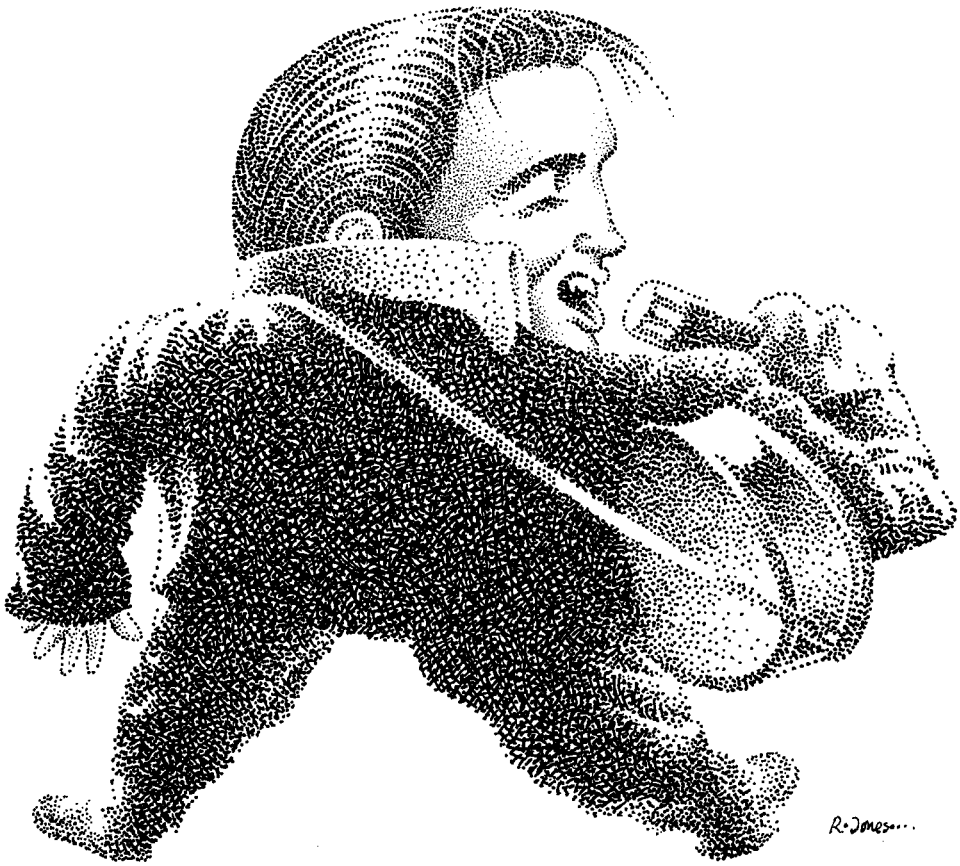

beleaguered, half-mystified conviction of the essential dignity of the carnival. ("It is too easy to dismiss it as tasteless," Molly Ivins found herself saying in a piece for the New York *Times*; "it is not required that love be in impeccable taste.") And what I like best about the book is its recovery of some human realities—feelings, attitudes, behavior—that our period's increasingly sophisticated discourse on popular culture tends to obscure.

Writers in this field speak regularly about "eclecticism"—i.e. Elvis Presley's ability, shared by several other white performers of the period, to draw together musical idioms formerly segregated (blues, gospel, country). But Presley's musical contemporaries speak a homelier and more vital tongue in *When Elvis Died*. They remember the black-haired truck driver's excitement as he hung about listening to "alien" performers and tried memorizing their tunes; they also remember their own puzzled, condescending satisfaction in this youngster's eagerness to learn. B. B. King, the blues singer, tells about meeting Presley on Beale Street in Memphis—describes him listening intently on a street corner to a jug band playing for the coins of passersby. The leader of the Statesmen Gospel Quartet remembers that at the group's monthly concerts Elvis Presley, a high school senior, " 'used to come around to the stage door, because he couldn't afford a ticket. . . . he'd come by so often, he knew every song by memory. He'd stand in the wings and sing along with us while we were singing on stage.' " A high school classmate, now a psychiatrist, remembers Presley racing home from school in order not to miss the afternoon radio broadcast by Sister Rosetta Tharpe. A well-known black composer and choir leader, W. Herbert Brewster, minister of a Memphis Baptist church, remembers that on Sunday nights in the fifties white people joined his black congregation—musicians, medical students from the University of Tennessee, others:

> . . . they came to be in the big camp meeting. . . . And in that crowd was this young fellow Elvis. He enjoyed it to the highest; he liked the rhythm we put into it. . . . He was driving a truck. . . . But he would get here as early as he could, get right up in front, and sometimes come back here. A bunch of them would get back here in the office before I could get out, and they were sitting on the floor with whatever they were wearing, and we just downed every kind of mark or line of demarcation and said we'll all just be people. . . . [Presley] had a good voice.

There's a trace of sentimentality in the minister's remembrance of this hour of solidarity. (I find his nostalgia easy to share.) And it's proper to acknowledge that accounts of white men's excitement at learning to imitate "race" music have been multiplying in recent days. (Among the best I've read is the interview with the clarinetist Bud Jacobson that appears in Ann Banks's recent *First Person America*.) Still, reading about Elvis Presley, the untrained high school kid delightedly sampling musical styles, teaching himself exotic sounds for the plain joy of the deed, is enlivening. "Eclecticism" becomes a lived experience of discovery and surprise.

The Gregorys are also shrewd about working-class attitudes, lighting up complications that don't surface in, for instance, Studs Terkel on the fading of the American dream of success, or the sociologists Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb writing on "hidden injuries of class." In theory, it's the rags-to-riches motif incarnated in Presley's career that enchanted his following (truck-driving high school grad makes it big; "Elvis represented the one ray of hope for millions of Americans," as a San Francisco reporter put it). But other dimensions appear. Presley was widely admired for his sturdy unresponsiveness to those imperatives of self-improvement that usually rack the successful. Neither his tastes (Cadillacs, satin finery, down-home folk) nor the style of his generosity (impulsive gifts of Cadillacs and satin finery to down-home folk) ever changed. And his fans seem to have taken much satisfaction in this stability. Voice after voice in the book speaks of the man in a fashion suggesting that he constituted a sanctuary and a defense—justification for refusing to heed the authorities who tell you to work harder, enjoy yourself less, read better books, get higher grades, shed your malaise, and so on. It's hard to credit, perhaps, but one great gift that the wildly gyrating rock star seems to have bestowed upon his people was self-acceptance, surcease, rest.

Or, describing the gift another way: it was the relief and the exhilaration of a culture of one's own. *When Elvis Died* comments only obliquely on the complex set of moral, political, and economic issues figuring in intellectual debate about "elitism versus populism," but the comment is valuable nevertheless, once again because it moves the perti-

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nent issues closer to facts of feeling. Thanks to academicians and novelists, everybody now knows about the worldwide pervasiveness of pop-cult and its destructive impact on coherent patterns of family, village, or tribal life (see any anthropologist writing on "modernization"; or see John Updike's *The Coup*). Everybody also knows—thanks to culture critics preoccupied with the problem of standards—about perceived declines of craft, "excellence," and the like. But the Gregorys somehow manage to nudge this discourse onto fresh ground. The people they quote who object to the deification of Presley and to the extravagant public grief powerfully remind us that popular commercial culture is still understood by many as a species of treachery. (I find it hard to understand, says one letter-writer, how "the President of the United States of America can pay tribute to a man who caused many parents distress.") The deifiers, on the other hand, remind one anew of the extent to which the commitment to Presley was felt as a gesture on behalf of one's own fearless honesty, one's willingness to do battle against hypocritical prudishness and to obey the sacred injunction to be oneself. The real-world conflict between elitism and populism emerges as a moral drama, with a confrontation between suspicion and pride at its center; no academic exercise, in short, but a struggle engaging powerful human feelings.

To repeat: *When Elvis Died* isn't a work of vast intellectual subtlety or analytical depth. Media freaks will value it primarily for the exhaustiveness of its survey of the workings of the industry at a moment of astonishing public pressure. But I'm struck by the book's direct and indirect penetration of the inner life of the mass audience—the inexpressible beliefs and turbulent passions shaping pop-cultural response.

THE HUMANITIES IN AMERICAN LIFE (University of California Press, $3.50) is the product of a three-year study by the Rockefeller Foundation's Commission on the Humanities, a thirty-two-member board chaired by Richard Lyman, former president of Stanford, which undertook to "offer a profile of the humanities in education and American public life" and to "recommend means for strengthening them over the next decade."

At the time the commission was appointed, I thought it had too many administrators, corporate and academic, and too few practicing teachers and writers. But several able academicians (including Professors Helen Vendler and William Gass) were aboard, and the enterprise was obviously conducted with earnest care. Accepting a definition formulated by Lord Bullock, the report presents the humanities as a "mixed economy" combining "elements of fact, speculation and judgment, the objective and the subjective," and productive of truth that's often first of all a tone of voice. It's particularly skillful in assessing current private and public programs of support for the humanities. And its tolerance of cultural diversity is conspicuously greater than that, say, of an average liberal arts college faculty. Many of the commission's specific recommendations have been made before, by other bodies, but the group aspired to be sound, not necessarily original. (The commissioners emphasize the need for improving secondary school instruction in the subjects in question; they're also intelligently critical of the predominance of education courses in teacher-training institutions.)

I confess, though, that I found the study as a whole prissy, bodiless, scoutmasterish—marked throughout by an air of unreality. "Our citizens need to become literate in a multiple sense." "We must all learn something about the use of the media." Whose citizens are "our" citizens? Who composes this "we"? The problem appears strikingly in the treatment of—yet once more—elitism and populism. The commissioners are impatient with the "elitist-populist formula" because it "polarizes opinions" and leads to silly notions: "The rich are thought elitist because they can afford educational and cultural activities the poor cannot." Convinced that the happy, stressless coexistence of popular culture and high culture is a possibility, they propose a variety of schemes for developing classroom détente. (Nobody seems to have been troubled by the absence from the panel of a working representative of popular culture.) Every word they utter is decent, liberal, right-minded—and utterly out of touch with the opposition: unaware, that is, of popular culture as an act of defiance against "the disciplines of the humanities"; unwilling to grasp—or incapable of grasping—that, in a crucial respect, the world of pop is a protest against the perceived lifelessness and abstraction of the official light-bringing culture of our day. The point isn't that spokespersons for the humanities need to go off for a retreat with "You Ain't Nothin' But a Houn' Dog." The point is that knowledge of what's at the core of that performance is indispensable to anybody seriously interested in widening access to "the humanities" and thereby re-energizing them. Anger and mockery are at the core, speaking bluntly—anger at light-bringers who are persuaded they know what's good for "our" citizens but who, to judge from the sound of their voices, don't know everything they should about what's wrong with themselves. Until this needed knowledge is in hand, the commissioners and the rest of us are, I'm afraid, just talking to ourselves.

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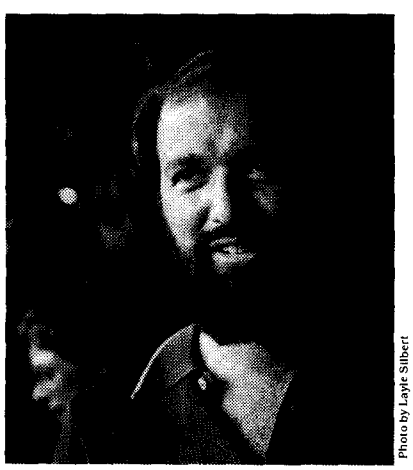

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AZTEC by Gary Jennings. Atheneum, $15.95. Mr. Jennings is a first-class storyteller. The picaresque adventures of his Indian hero range from end to end of the Aztec empire and from bottom to top of pre-conquest society, never losing momentum and surprise. Blood flows, literally, in rivulets, violence abounds, treachery flourishes. So does lechery, and in this area Mr. Jennings has achieved true distinction. He has arranged a situation that realistically justifies the erotic episodes without which, nowadays, a historical novel can hardly be considered respectable.

AN UNEASY VICTORIAN: Thackeray the Man 1811–1863 by Ann Monsarrat. Dodd, Mead, $15.00. Although uncongenial strangers often found him board-stiff and snow-cold, Thackeray was, among friends, affectionate, comical, tolerant, occasionally foolish, and generous to the point of idiocy. Both his clear-eyed, commonsense view of society and his size (six foot three was gigantic for the time) made him something of a misfit in Victorian England, while a mad wife and a dreadful mother-in-law did not improve matters. As a gentleman without funds or professional training, he survived on literary hackwork until *Vanity Fair* established him as a major novelist at the age of thirty-seven. He has held that position ever since. Ms. Monsarrat's excellently written biography not only brings this likable genius plausibly to life, it arouses an urge to read, or reread, everything he wrote. Illustrations, notes, index.

HENRY MOORE'S SHEEP SKETCHBOOK, with comments by Henry Moore and Kenneth Clark. Thames & Hudson, $19.95. Between sculptures, Mr. Moore looks out the window and doodles the sheep that graze around his place. This is a reproduction of the sketchbook in which he drew the sheepiest sheep that ever were—a delightful mixture of the monumental and the ridiculous.

THE QUESTION OF SEPARATISM by Jane Jacobs. Random House, $8.95. Although Quebec recently voted against separation from the rest of Canada, the possibility of such a move is far from dead. Ms. Jacobs's lucid, compact, and very shrewd argument for the potential financial and administrative benefit, to both parties, of an amicable divorce remains worth serious attention.

THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF CHACHAJI by Ved Mehta. Oxford, $15.95. Mr. Mehta's journal of the making of an award-winning documentary film about his own "proverbial poor relation" becomes a panorama of Indian society combined with a revelation of what goes into the confection of such a television piece. The style is so suavely deadpan that one is likely to be in the middle of the next paragraph before the shudder or the giggle catches up, but catch up they do, for the tale is both horrifying and funny. Illustrations.

A SHOAL OF FISHES by Andō Hiroshige. Viking and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, $16.95. Best known for his landscape prints, Hiroshige was a master of other subjects as well, and these fish (first published in 1832–1833) beautifully prove it. The reproductions are a treasure for any admirer of Japanese woodblock work.

DEATH BED by Stephen Greenleaf. Dial, $10.95. Hammett and Chandler are dead, but the California private eye mystery is still alive and doing pretty well in the hands of Mr. Greenleaf.

GALAXIES by Timothy Ferris. Sierra Club, $75.00. The author works hard to maintain equilibrium, but readers with no astronomical training may find this guided tour around the universe a rather dizzying affair. Anyone, however, will enjoy the large, brilliant color plates—the greatest fireworks display yet captured in printer's ink. They are gorgeous.

SYNAPSIDA by John C. McLoughlin. Viking, $14.95. Mr. McLoughlin is a bit too determined to amuse, and a bit too inclined to read into the assumed behavior of early animals the well-known bad habits of their human descendants, but his "new look into the origin of mammals" is interesting and his drawings vividly reconstruct beasts whose appearance was even more stupefying than the names with which taxonomists have saddled them.

THE HUNT by John G. Mitchell. Knopf, $10.95. Since he is neither a dedicated hunter nor a complete non-hunter, the author is well placed to make this fair-minded report on who hunts, and where, and under what conditions, and why. He has found enlightening answers, spread from the eastern uplands to Texas to Alaska, to all these questions except the last, which remains a matter of the individual hunter's temperament—and perhaps it should be noted that Mr. Mitchell is reporting on hunters, not those drunks, litterbugs and cow-killers who disgrace the name. Whether he is describing scenery, recording campfire chat, or quoting Ortega y Gasset, he writes with an elegance and intelligence that make the book both delightful and thought-provoking.

THE VICEROY OF OUIDAH by Bruce Chatwin. Summit, $11.95. Mr. Chatwin, author of that superb travel book *In Patagonia*, went to what is now Benin intending to write a life of De Souza, the Brazilian slave-trader who operated in the area during the early nineteenth century, but political turmoil and a modern Amazon who stamped on his big toe convinced him that the project was impractical. Instead, he has woven what facts he did collect into a cool, terse, terrifying novel about the mutually corrupting effects of the partnership between such a slave-merchant and the Dahomean king who supplied his human goods. This is Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* seen through a microscope.

BIGFOOT by Kenneth Wylie. Viking, $14.95. Mr. Wylie began his study of the Bigfoot phenomenon, and of those people who chase the elusive creature or seek to profit by the search, with no belief that "Something is out there," but ended by believing that "Something strange is going on out there," and it certainly is, even if "out there" proves, as the author suspects, to be inside the human head. That he persisted and finished his inconclusive book is itself evidence of the fascination exercised by the idea of something outside official, reasonable knowledge or control.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

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Robert Strozier is an essayist and promotional copywriter.

Henry Bromell's new novel, *The Follower*, will be published later this year.

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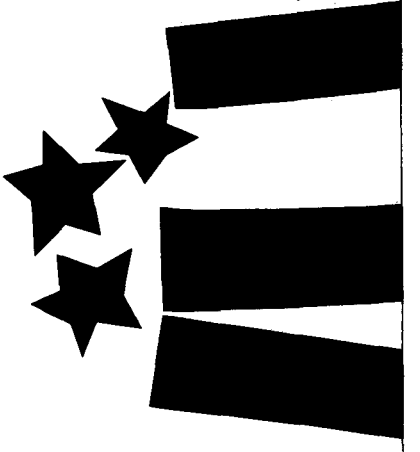

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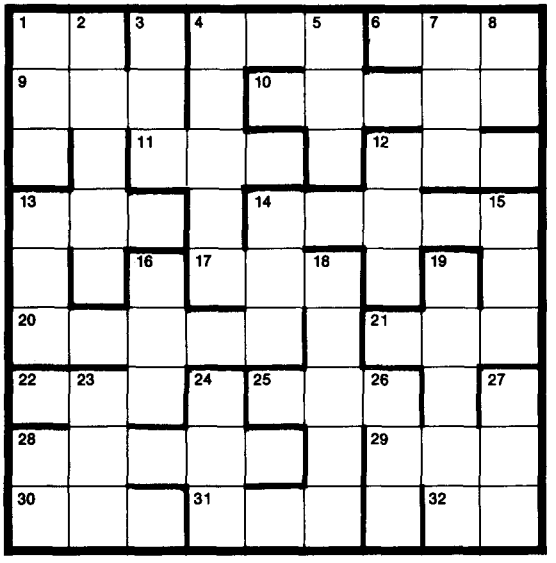
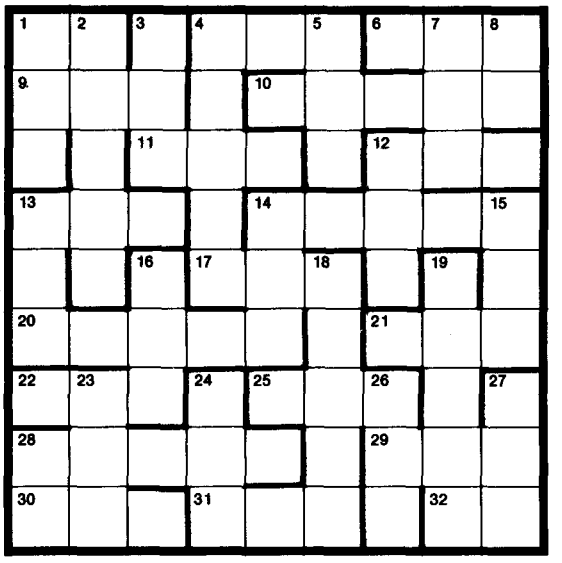
by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon





SCHIZOGRAMMATA

(Acknowledgments to ffancy of *The Listener* and Doug and Janis Heller)

The letters of the alphabet have been divided into two categories: the letters in each category have a feature in common. Answers all contain an equal number of letters from the two categories. (However, not all 26 letters of the alphabet have been used in the puzzle.) Letters in the category including "A" are to be entered in the left-hand diagram, and those in the category including "B" in the right-hand diagram. The normal order of the letters in the answers, apart from this division, is preserved. Answers include one proper noun. Punctuation may be used deceptively.

ACROSS

1. Crazy clubs (4)
4. Depraved, as a bed is depraved (6)
6. Arranges piano strings (6)
9. Masquerading date—go dressed up like Caligula (6)
10. Ruined pins can get dull (10)
11. How to rescue hostage—gypsy has answer (6)
12. Fool's taken in by wager in card game (6)
13. Shoot tree with chemical (6)
14. Persons bearing large features (10)
17. Spoiled from being in wedlock, I must get divorced (6)
20. Congressman is offended by shows (10)
21. Person dancing frug, i.e. (6)
22. Dinner's about over (6)
25. Perfectly learned round is in dialect (6)
28. Oldish pear, rotten and globular (10)
29. Marlo's false teeth (6)
30. Before storm, Georgia makes a shelter (6)
31. A con is running a gambling house (6)
32. Deplorable English novelist (4)

DOWN

1. South African has a sort of square hat (6)
2. Vehicle for instructor on Broadway? (10)
3. Yikes—a horde is out of control (2,4)
4. Mediocre motion picture shower gets sudden idea (10)
5. Plan to send GI traveling (6)
7. Decay that is found in autos (6)
8. Understand Dutch issue (4)
12. Battered police badge with number (6)
13. Tinker's club (6)
14. Confront wild bears with teaspoon (6)
15. Gunman in pines shot Republican (6)
16. What drivers call street with trees (6)
18. Coordinate varied adornment (10)
19. Fighters and thugs in conversation (10)
23. Look—a very soft piece of corn (6)
24. Coal scattered about sewer (6)
26. Nucleus, while having the same atomic number as another, is more unstable (6)
27. Pole, in speech, assembled a crowd (6)
28. What a woolly dog has to fetch (4)

Note: The instructions above are the special instructions for this month's puzzle. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, write to The Atlantic Reprint Department, enclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

The solution to last month's Puzzler appears on page 7.

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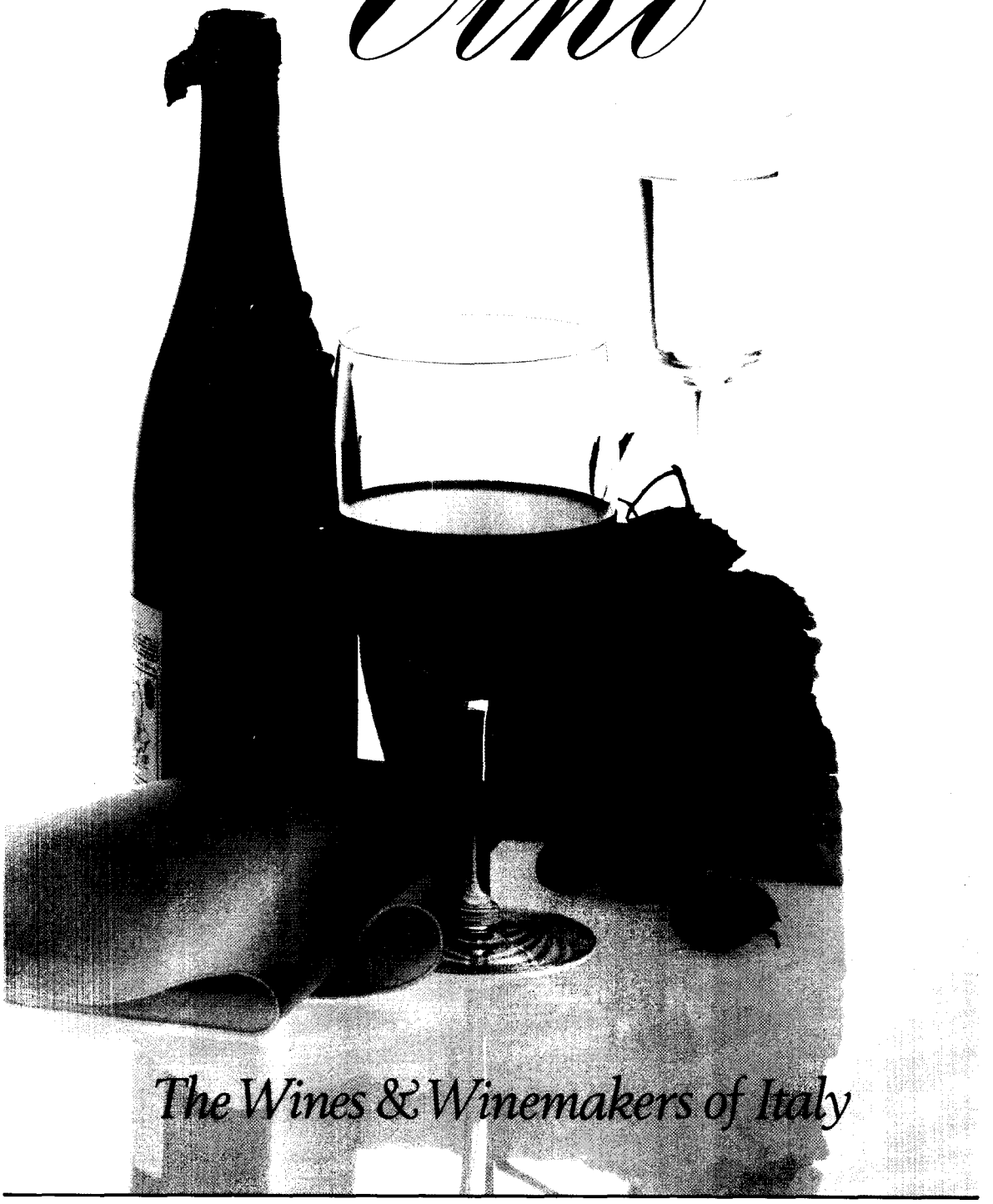

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